Guiding Kindergarten Children in the Church School

Elizabeth Mee Shields

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Guiding Kindergarten Children IN THE Church School

By

ELIZABETH McE. SHIELDS

A Textbook in the Standard Course in Leadership Training, outlined and approved by the International Council of Religious Education

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Editor's Introduction

"THE curriculum is 90 per cent teacher." This assertion is being made by Christian educators with more and more conviction. If the statement is essentially true, the development of a consecrated and skilled staff of leaders is the first responsibility of a teaching church. The past decade has witnessed a rapid improvement in curriculum materials, and many have expected that, in some mysterious way, teaching methods would advance automatically. But, too often, these better materials in the hands of untrained leaders have produced disappointment and discouragement. The training of leaders for the teaching task must parallel the introduction of higher types of curricula.

Denominational education boards are therefore laying greater stress than formerly upon the training of a leadership qualified for the educational work of the local church. Their efforts, through both denominational and interdenominational channels, have not been without reward. The past ten years have seen a remarkable growth in the number of leaders in training. The chief problem confronting the friends of leadership training today is that of how to develop actual skill in teaching rather than a mere verbal acquaintance with a few psychological laws.

The total program of training carried forward by the denominations, severally and co-operatively, includes four leadership curricula—The International Reading Course, The High School Leadership Curriculum, The Standard Leadership Curriculum and The Advanced Leadership Curriculum. Each of these has its distinct purpose and field.

The Standard Leadership Curriculum, for which this text is prepared, is designed for the training of all persons who are engaged in leadership in any phase of the local church's educational program. It is organized on the basis of course units, each of which covers not less than ten fifty-minute periods. Each student in training, in order to receive a Standard Leadership Diploma, must complete twelve courses. Of the twelve courses required for the diploma, nine are prescribed and three are elective. Of the nine prescribed courses, six are general and three are specialization units.

In making available for this total leadership training program materials which are educationally sound and relatively inexpensive, the Leadership Training Publishing Association is rendering a unique service. This Association is an unincorporated group of representatives of the educational, editorial, and publishing agencies of "such evangelical denominations as may desire to co-operate in the purposes of the Association," which are "to prepare and publish through the denominational houses materials needed in the conduct of the leadership training program of the co-operating denominations." Through its various committees the Association selects writers, circulates outlines and manuscripts for rigid criticism, and publishes those which meet the high requirements of the present-day training program. The books already published are evidence of the past success and present standing of this co-operative Association.

This text, GUIDING KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN IN THE CHURCH SCHOOL, is intended as a guide and source book for students pursuing course-unit Number 23, "Beginners' Department Administration," which is one of the required specialization units for both teachers and officers in the Kindergarten of the church school. It has been prepared both to set forth the best leadership pro-

cedures and at the same time to present them in a way which is plain to the average church-school worker. In its scope and treatment particular care has been given to correlating its contents with those to be included in the forthcoming text for course-unit Number 22, "Beginners' Materials and Methods," in order that these two texts shall be companion volumes. This present book is more than a body of reading matter, since it includes many items designed to make the training course a real experience in thinking, in observation, and in practical activity on the part of the worker in training.

The choice of Miss Elizabeth McE. Shields as a writer for this text was an exceedingly happy one, for she is a leader of recognized standing in her field. To a background of teaching experience in the public schools, she has added years of service to the cause of Christian education in her own denomination and beyond it. She is now Editor and Director of the Children's Division of the Department of Religious Education of the Southern Presbyterian Church. Miss Shields is author of the vacation church-school course, *Beginners in God's World,* has for eight years written lessons for Kindergarten children in the Sunday church school, and is the editor of two song books for children. All her work is of a high order; and we believe that this present volume is no exception.

The Leadership Training Publishing Association, confident of the widespread use and approval of this text, recommends it to those who wish to become better leaders of Kindergarten children in our churches.

—ERWIN L. SHAVER, *Chairman,*
Editorial and Educational Section.

Author's Introduction

THIS book has been written especially for teachers and prospective teachers of four and five-year-old children in the church school, but may have a wider usefulness if shared with parents. It is primarily a source book for constant reference, even though it is planned for use as a text in Standard Leadership Schools and Classes and in correspondence courses.

It is very difficult to separate the administrative problems of a church-school Kindergarten from other problems which seem to have more to do with what has been accepted in the past as teaching procedure. For this reason there has been no attempt to make this exclusively a textbook on the organization and administration of the department.

When the Leadership Training Publishing Association faced the need for two new textbooks for leaders of Kindergarten children they also faced the problem of assigning to authors the definite fields of discussion to be covered. After much thought and consultation it was thought best to divide the problems, each book supplementing the other in a way that would unify the discussion. An examination of the table of contents will show that practically all of the administrative problems have been cared for in this book, while at the same time it is not confined strictly to such problems.

A companion book entitled *Experiences in the Church-School Kindergarten* is being prepared by Miss Frances Weld Danielson and Miss Jessie Eleanor Moore. This companion text will include such problems as: The purpose of the church-school Kindergarten; learning through experience (a clear discussion of the curriculum of the Kindergarten); a reinterpretation of the old idea

of "the lesson"; values in story-telling; play, discussed from several different viewpoints; the use that is made of "seeing" and "touching" in planning for the learning of children; enterprises through which it is natural for children to learn (a clear picture of children at work together); learning through fellowship; the informal teaching which enables the teacher to follow the lead of the children; a recognition of the necessity for using the creative ability of children in all of their activities.

Great care has been taken to make the two books really companion books. There is no overlapping, although a casual examination of chapter titles will not always reveal this. For example, in this book stories are treated from the standpoint of preparation and telling, while the companion book discusses thoroughly the value and use of stories. There is only one problem that is thoroughly discussed in both books. It is the question of purpose as handled in the first chapter of each book. It is, however, handled so differently that readers should not feel that a discussion has been duplicated, but rather that two angles of a problem have been presented—angles of a problem that is so comprehensive that it will bear much future discussion.

The present volume is sent out in the hope that those who read it may never drive or dominate little children, but may serve as guides along roads that lead to satisfying religious experiences.

—Elizabeth McEwen Shields.

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GUIDING KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN IN THE CHURCH SCHOOL

CHAPTER I

Our Purpose in Teaching Little Children

Reach Down Your Hand

"Reach down your hand!
The little one who trudges by your side
Is striving hard to match your grown-up stride;
But, oh, his feet are very tiny yet,
His arm so short—I pray you, don't forget—
Reach down your hand!

"Keep soft your voice!
For it was such a little while ago
This small one left the place where tones are low;
His voice still holds the cadence of that land
Where no one ever gave a stern command—
Keep soft your voice!

"Lift up your heart!
The little child you struggle so to teach
Has resource far above the human reach;
Lift up your heart!"

—*Lucie Haskell Hill.*[1]

A Specific Purpose

Picture Number One.—There was the sound of chimes in the church tower; the sunshine poured through the clear glass of the east windows; the Kindergarten superintendent stood waiting in the room that was the children's very own in the church school—their very own even when the children were not present, for its atmosphere silently spoke of them. Soon, however, the children

[1]From "Children" (now *Parents' Magazine*). Used by permission.

began to come, singly, in pairs, and in groups, until there was a happy crowd—fifteen in all—most of whom were immediately attracted to some bright pictures on the picture rail.

"Oh, they are birdies!" exclaimed a happy little voice, and soon a number of children were touching the pictures, asking questions of Miss Jean and her helper and giving information about the birds they happened to know.[2]

By and by a child discovered the picture of a bird's nest, and his discovery brought from quiet Arthur a piece of information that electrified the children, the teacher, and the helper:

"I saw one this morning, out in that tree!"

Quickly Miss Jean eliminated from her morning program the last year's bird's nest carefully reposing in the cupboard, waiting to be introduced at the proper time, and calling the children to her, she said, "Arthur has found a bird's nest in the yard and wants to show it to us. Let's go with him." So teacher, children, and helper went into the yard and stood under the tree where they could examine the nest. The children decided that it was made of sticks, leaves, grass, and one bit of paper.

"Let's gather sticks, leaves, and grass, and a piece of paper for a nest," was the adult suggestion, eagerly received by the children.

It took some time to find just the kind of sticks and grass a bird would use, but soon with the help of each there was a reasonable supply, which was placed on the ground in the center of the group.

"Can you make a bird's nest?" was the teacher's question.

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[2]A large chart of birds may be procured from the Arm and Hammer Soda Company. The Perry Pictures Company, Malden, Mass., has also some attractive pictures of birds.

There was an uncertain touching of the sticks and grass and a look of uncertainty on the faces of the children until Bobby eagerly said, "I think *I* can make one."

"All right, Bobby, you may try," was the answer.

"But I'll have to have a bush or something to put it in," said the little fellow.

A bush was found near-by, but, as Bobby was about to begin, a doubt of his ability seemed to cross his mind and he said, "I don't believe I *really* can," and sat down again. Three times he showed a desire to build the nest and almost rose to do it, but each time on second thought he gave it up. At last he said again, "I don't believe I *really* can."

The teacher waited patiently while he came to this decision, which seemed to have an influence on the group, and then she turned to her assistant and asked, "Can *you* build a nest?" The answer came back, "I am sure I cannot." Then, while a hush was on the group, she said, "*People* cannot build nests. God, our heavenly Father, has taught only birds to build nests. He has taught people to do things birds cannot do and birds to do things people cannot do. It is very wonderful."

Then she told the following story:

The birds went "Chee, chee, chee, chee," and Little Boy was listening.

They were in the apple tree at the side of the house—a mother bird and a father bird.

The mother bird flew down to the ground and picked up a piece of grass and flew back into the tree. Then very quickly the father bird followed her and caught up a little stick or twig in his bill—and Little Boy was watching.

"What are the birds doing, Mother?" asked Little Boy.

"They are building a nest," Mother said.

"What is a nest, Mother?"

"A nest is a home for baby birds. By and by the birds will finish their home and you can see it if you are careful not to touch it."

The birds flew back and forth to different places in the yard. They put each stick and bit of grass and piece of string into place until a beautiful nest was made, and all the time Little Boy was watching.

"Who showed them how to do that?" he asked, and his eyes were bright.

"Our heavenly Father showed them how. He made the birds and showed them how to build their bird homes or nests. It's wonderful, isn't it, Boy?"

Little Boy's eyes had a look that eyes have when a person is thinking about God, and he said softly, "Yes, it is wonderful!"

Little Boy had the same look in his eyes one day when Mother let him climb with her on the step ladder to peep carefully into the birds' home when mother and father bird were away. They saw three blue eggs.

"It's wonderful, isn't it, Boy?" Mother said again, and Little Boy said softly, "Yes, it is wonderful."

He had the same look in his eyes when the baby birds came out of the eggs and the mother and father bird sang their very sweetest songs. He felt like singing, too.

He did sing, too. He and Mother sang:

"All things bright and beautiful,
All things large and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
Our Father made them all."[3]

While the story was being told, there was that on the faces of the children as they listened which made the teacher feel that she was sharing some worth-while knowledge and enriching the experience through which the group was living. When they came back into the room it seemed most natural that they should gather about the piano while Miss Jean played, "All Things Bright and Beautiful." There was real appreciation of the song as they sang it.

The children trooped happily home, and the teacher and her helper remained a few minutes to put the pic-

[3]C. F. Alexander. Found in most song books for children.

tures in order and to answer the questions of a visiting friend who had been present throughout the hour.

"It seemed almost as if it all just happened, and yet you must have had some plan. Did you have a plan, or did it just happen that pictures, conversation, story, and music all seemed to help to do one thing?"

"Yes, I had a plan, but my purpose was bigger and more important than my plan. I think Arthur helped to carry out my purpose better than I could have carried it out unaided by him."

"I see what you mean. Even though the children would never connect it with a 'purpose,' I believe the youngest child in the group went home feeling, 'Isn't God wonderful to make little birds and show them how to build nests?' Perhaps a few of them even put it into words. What would your plan have been if Arthur had not discovered the nest in such a timely way?"

Miss Jean went to the cabinet and took out her treasured last year's nest, and said, "This would have helped. I should have used it in place of the new one."

"I believe," said the visitor, "that if I had been prepared with a last year's nest, I should not have had the judgment to change to Arthur's discovery. I should probably have acknowledged his statement courteously and then proceeded to show *my* discovery."

Miss Jean laughed and said, "You are doing yourself an injustice, I am sure, but I must admit that it took me a long time to make a distinction between plans and purposes—to hold my plan in abeyance while I adhered to my purpose and to watch for the leading of the children in carrying out my purpose."

There was more talk about where to find suitable story material, songs, pictures, and so forth; and then the friends parted.

PICTURE NUMBER TWO.—Miss Brown, the Kindergarten superintendent, arrived a bit breathless, to find nearly all of her seventeen children in their places. Their places were the chairs carefully arranged in a circle.

The lesson in the teacher's quarterly or manual was, "God's Care of the Birds," but Miss Brown had a regular routine through which she put the children so that they could have their program.

"Their program" was a misnomer, for it was "her program," and it was carried out in the same way each Sunday. They always sang "Good Morning" and some other songs which they knew. They always said a prayer, naming the things for which they should be thankful.

It never once occurred to Miss Brown that she could really teach anything through the use of a song. She would not have understood what you meant if you had suggested that a spirit of worship might permeate a whole session.

Practically the only connection which she made with the thought of "God's Care of the Birds" was the story. In fact, in her thinking, "the story" was "the lesson"; and her plan was the same plan every Sunday, with a variation in the story. If you had confronted her on any one Sunday with the question, "Have you a plan for today?" she would have been surprised that you did not know, for she has a plan every Sunday, and it is the same plan. Had you asked her, "What was your purpose for today?" she would have been at a loss for a proper reply. After thought the answer might have been, "To help the children to worship God and to teach the Bible."

Admitting that this was her purpose, her plan in carrying it out was certainly a very poor one. And if

the purpose for the day stated was really her purpose, it was much too general to be accomplished in one week.

Let us compare this vague, general purpose with the specific, definite purpose of "Miss Jean," stated by her visitor as she voiced the thoughts of the children, "Isn't God wonderful to make little birds and show them how to build nests?" Can you not visualize the difference in development of the two groups in their two years' experience in the Kindergarten of the church school? The children under the leadership of Miss Jean are not being introduced to generalities: They are being helped day by day to meet specific problems. They are living through rich experiences.

A Comprehensive Purpose

IT IS HOPED that in dwelling on the specific purpose for each week we have not given the impression that there is no place for a more comprehensive purpose which the church-school Kindergarten teacher should have in mind as she plans for the experiences through which she and her children may live for the space of two years. You may be quite sure that the teacher who led her children to find out that "God is wonderful to make little birds and show them how to build nests" had carefully tried to think of all the roads from a little child's heart to God, and, with a very definite purpose, big enough to include the religious education of a child for two of the most important years of his life, was leading her group step by step along the way. Today it was "Heavenly Father's Care for the Birds." At other times it was "Heavenly Father's Care for Me in the Dark," "Good Gifts from the Heavenly Father," and so forth, to a gradual building up of a beautiful, well-rounded conception of God in the minds of the children.

This well-rounded conception (including the attitude of the children toward Jesus) was, of course, the most important part of her purpose, but her comprehensive purpose included other objectives also—objectives which have to do with the day-by-day development of Christian character in the work and play situations in which little children find themselves; objectives which have to do with attitudes toward other races; and with appreciation of the Bible and of the church.

Arriving at a Comprehensive Purpose

Is NOT the choice of a comprehensive purpose important enough to spend some time in considering how this teacher and others like her choose their goals and decide "what I want my children to know and to be and to do within two years"?

We can never arrive at a comprehensive purpose or adequate objective until we know the capacities of our children and what they need in the home life, church-school life, and day-school life they are living.

The objectives of many a teacher would be modified or completely changed by living every day in the home of one of her children. Even frequent visits which enable her to share the family life and the play life of the children she teaches will tend to make her teaching real rather than theoretical.

Many situations such as the one developed in this chapter arise in the church school, as we live there with our children. If our eyes are keen and our sympathies alert we shall learn to use them in "arriving" at our purpose. Visits to the neighborhood public-school kindergarten are of untold value, also. There we see our children as they react to other children. We learn to know their school problems that have religious significance;

and this knowledge, of course, has an important bearing on our purpose.

While contacts with the immediate situations of our children in home, church-school, and day-school life are most important in formulating objectives, we must not lose sight of the fact that these children will soon be Primary children and Juniors and Adolescents and Adults. There must be a recognition of this in any complete purpose. It does not cause a "nurseryman" to be less tender and careful of a young tree because of the fact that he can visualize what that tree may become when it is full grown. The fact that he can sense its needs through the future stages of its growth will make him a more efficient caretaker in its immaturity. This leads us to say that in children, as in trees, the best preparation for future stages of development is made by giving to them what they need now for their present, everyday living. The teacher with a comprehensive purpose will have a broad knowledge of the needs of children, youth, and adults so that she can measure her purpose in the light of this knowledge.

A Statement of Desired Outcomes

It is not our thought, here, to give an exhaustive list of the outcomes which each teacher must desire for her children. The following are given as suggested desired outcomes in some of the ordinary relationships in which little children find themselves. The thoughtful teacher may add to these and, in certain instances, formulate others which are even more specific. With these outcomes in mind, it will not be difficult for a teacher to state her purposes or objectives. In order that we may think of individual children, rather than groups of children, we are stating the outcomes as answers to questions that may be asked by a parent:

1. *What do I want my child to think of God?*

I should like for my child to think of God as:

The One who makes the flowers and trees and all growing things.

The One who makes the birds and animals.

The One who made the sun and moon and stars, oceans and mountains.

The One who makes sunsets and rainbows.

The One who sends the rain and snow and wind.

The One who lets people help him with growing things—food to eat and flowers and trees and shrubs to make the world beautiful.

The One who gave my daddy and mother to me—who knows even more than they know and loves me even more than they do.

The One who made me and all of the people in the world and loves us all.

The One who lets me help him care for his birds and animals and people.

The One who watches over and cares for me, but who expects me to help to care for myself.

The One who is pleased when I share and help and am happy, and who is sorry when I disobey or when I am unkind or cross.

The One to whom I can talk any time and anywhere—about things that make me happy or unhappy or things that are hard to do.

2. *What do I want my child to think of Jesus?*

I want my child to think of Jesus as the Son of God and best friend of little children; who was once a little baby; who grew as other boys grow; who showed us how to be kind and obedient and happy; who grew to be a man who went about doing good; who went to Heaven to get ready a

beautiful home for his big people friends and little people friends.

3. *How do I want my child to feel and act toward his family and other people in the home, including pets?*

I should like for my child to think of his home as planned by our heavenly Father; to think of father, mother, brothers, sisters, and other members of the family as the best friends that God has given—friends who help to make home the happy place our heavenly Father desires, and whom he may help in this undertaking; to appreciate the contribution made by the servants in the home and to show this appreciation through acts of courtesy and kindliness; to be considerate of his pets and responsible for their welfare.

4. *How do I want my child to feel and act toward everyday helpers in the community who touch his life?*

I want my child, through contact with the contributions to his happiness made by community helpers (such as the ice-man, grocery boy, postman, and so forth), to begin to appreciate the interdependence of the people in his world and to show his appreciation through acts of courtesy and kindliness.

5. *How do I want my child to feel and act toward his playmates?*

I want my child to realize that happiness in play comes through sharing games and toys and other pleasures, so that he may enjoy his playmates and feel that God is pleased when he does so.

6. *How do I want my child to feel and act toward friendly adults in his neighborhood?*

   I want my child to have a feeling of Christian neighborliness for adults who live near by, manifesting itself in acts of friendliness and courtesy.

7. *How do I want my child to feel and act toward people of other races?*

   I want my child to feel that our heavenly Father is the Father of all—loving the children who are black, brown, red, or yellow, as He loves us—and to act as if he believes this.

8. *How do I want my child to feel and act toward the church?*

   I want my child to feel, "We have the best times at church school. I love to go," coupled with a sense of responsibility for making his church-school room a happy place; to look forward toward the time in the future when he is old enough to go with daddy and mother to "hear the organ and sing with the big people"; to feel a little child's sense of ownership in the expression "my church" and "my minister."

9. *What do I want my child to think of the Bible?*

   I want my child to think of the Bible as the book which contains the stories and verses which he likes best of all—a different book from other books, because it tells the most about God, our heavenly Father, and Jesus, and tells us what is right and what is wrong.

10. *How do I want my child to feel and act toward beautiful music, stories, verses, pictures, and other materials of religious education?*

    I want my child to have a happy association with

these materials of religious education and to connect them with the natural situations which arise in his life, as a means to a deeper appreciation of God and happy living with other people.

11. *What kind of philosophy of life do I want my child to have?*

I want my child to begin to realize that God's world is not finished—that He is still working in it; that love is stronger than hate or fear; that spiritual posessions outweigh material possessions; that there are some questions which no one is wise enough yet to answer; that there is life after death. In other words, I want him to have a Christian philosophy of life. I do not want to teach him anything now which must be "unlearned" later, even though I realize that he can now only begin to understand the principles involved in such a philosophy.

For Assignment and Discussion

(*Choose one or more.*)

NOTE.—An experience-centered curriculum for children is a curriculum that grows out of the things that a child thinks and does. We may want him to "think" and "do" differently, but we shall have to lead him by way of what he now thinks and does. If we desire to teach him cooperation, we must first discover the things that he is interested in doing that can be done with other people. If we desire to teach him to know God better, we must find out what his experience with God has been up to the present time and must build the rest of our curriculum on this experience.

There are two schools of thought regarding the setting of goals or objectives. One is based on the idea that "an experience-centered curriculum" will not presuppose any objectives, but will take the child where he is and lead him to his own conclusions. The second is based on the idea that an adult who has lived through many of the same experiences as those through which the child is now living has a right to share his own experience, so that to the child's experience will be added the experience of the race, thus leading the child to certain desired outcomes. In the light of this explanation the following problems may be discussed:

1. Is it possible for a teacher to work toward definite goals or objectives in religious education, and at the same time use an experience-centered curriculum? If so, prove that there is no conflict between the two. If you do not agree give reasons for your answer.

2. If possible visit a Kindergarten in a church school (Sunday, weekday, or vacation session), and note (1) the purpose which the leader seemed to have in mind; (2) the materials used to achieve her purpose; (3) responses of the children which showed desired outcomes.

3. Examine the teacher's quarterly or manual for the present quarter and check the situations or "lessons" there treated, against the "desired outcomes" listed in this chapter, with a view to discovering which of these outcomes we might reasonably hope to achieve through the use of this material and the methods suggested for its use.

4. Is the whole responsibility of a leader of Kindergarten children met when she ministers to the present, everyday, religious needs of her children? Give reasons for your answer.

5. What difference is there between the objectives of general education and the objectives of religious education?

Helpful Books

TEACHING FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING, *Vieth.*
AN ADVENTURE WITH CHILDREN, *Mary Lewis.*
THE WORLD THAT WAS, *Bowman.*
CHILDREN ARE LIKE THAT, *Dixon.*
DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION, Chapter VII, *John Dewey.*
HOW SHALL I LEARN TO TEACH RELIGION? *Carrier.*
OBJECTIVES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, *Vieth.*
BETTY ANN, BEGINNER, *Dunlap.*
THE CHILD-CENTERED SCHOOL, *Rugg and Shumaker.*
CREATIVE TEACHING, *Suter.*
CHILD GUIDANCE, *Blanton and Blanton.*
TEACHING WITHOUT TEXTBOOKS, *Danielson and Perkins.*
THE WORSHIP OF THE LITTLE CHILD, Chapter III, *Baker.*

CHAPTER II

How Little Children Learn

IN THE realm of fairy stories very wise people use magic wands to make folks large or small, good or bad.

Learning Is Growth

If parents and other teachers could wave such wands over little children today, do you think we should experience the keen joy that we now know in watching results which do not come magically, but through a slower process which we call learning? I think not. The tapping of the wand would soon become mechanical, and the uniformity of the product would grow monotonous. We should lose that glow in Martha's eyes as she begins to feel a stirring of unselfishness, and we should miss the first look of awe on Theodore's face as he connects the evening star with the One who made all the stars. There is something in growth that is never monotonous, and learning is growth!

Really, when we come to think of it, who would be a mere "wand-tapper" when she might be a teacher? Who would be one to give out a stated amount of information each day when she might be one to help a little child to learn?

It is not always easy to help another to learn. Sometimes we accidently stumble into a procedure by which our efforts are crowned with success, but, because we do not know why we were successful, we fail again and again in other situations, and at times we fail in similar situations. We fail because we have not obeyed the laws of learning; for there are laws of learning. No

human being has made these laws. They are as unchangeable as the law of gravitation or the laws governing the germination of seed and the growth of plants. God has made many laws for the harmony of His universe, and thoughtful people have discovered some of them.

Roses grow and bloom best when we surround them with the conditions under which roses are meant to grow and bloom. They need a soil containing an abundance of clay, a good fertilizer occasionally, unlimited sunshine and frequent showers, careful weeding, and, at intervals, a loosening of the soil. We can supply part of these conditions, and God supplies the rest. When we fail to do our part, even God's sunshine and rain do not overcome our neglect. In other words, if we do not conform to God's laws for roses, the roses will be inferior.

There are some who accept God's rules for the growth of plants who never take the time to discover the laws which have to do with the mental and spiritual growth of human beings. They realize that the best method of helping roses to grow is achieved by the one who most nearly complies with the conditions governing the growth of roses, but do not always realize that the best method of helping children to develop (or learn) is the one which most nearly complies with the conditions governing the learning of children.

Ways of Learning

It is interesting to think of all of the different ways in which little children learn—interesting, but very difficult, for in any one learning process it is practically impossible to designate one way as the way by which learning is accomplished, because one method is intertwined with another. It clears our thinking, however, to discuss each

separately. We can best do this by watching little children in several learning situations to see if we can discover what it was that helped them to learn.

Trial and Success or Error—

1. Martha has been out in the yard, looking at her picture book. She forgets to bring it in. It rains in the night; and her book is ruined. Through a rather unfortunate experience she learns that "Everything in its place" is a very good rule.

2. "Let me do it," begs Ronald whenever an interesting activity is proposed in the Kindergarten. If his request succeeds, he will try again. If it succeeds again and again, he will habitually monopolize, without waiting his turn. If, when he selfishly tries to monopolize, he must always wait his turn, he will learn that begging is useless.

3. A group of children took a Thanksgiving basket to a shut-in. She accepted it in such a happy spirit that they went away well pleased with their experience—having a childlike realization of the principle, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Very early in life a child begins to understand that some of his undertakings are failures and some are successes. He is constantly experimenting in his everyday activities. These experiences are the very best possible avenues of learning. "Experience is the best teacher"; and we call the method through which she teaches, the "Trial and Success or Error Method."

Parents and church-school teachers do not always realize that the child is constantly attaching the words "error" or "success" to the various experiences through which he leads himself, or through which we lead him. He does not of course think of these words, but he thinks whatever corresponds to them in a little child's terminology. Perhaps he thinks: "no fun," "makes me tired," "hurts," "don't like it" for *error;* and "fun," "good time," "nice," "I like it" for *success.* At any rate, he is classifying his experiences, and those that are "nice" and that he "likes" are the ones he will be glad to repeat,

while those that are "no fun" or that he does not "like" or that have something unpleasant associated with them will not be repeated by him, if he has the choice.

Observation—

A group of Kindergarten children were taken into the church auditorium for a few minutes to co-operate in a Rally-Day service. When they returned to their own room, Tinsley said, "I saw Mary and wanted to wave to her, but I knew that would not look right, so I didn't."

How did Tinsley learn that waving to a friend in the church auditorium was different from waving in the Kindergarten, where it was often quite permissible? Doubtless through observation. He felt the atmosphere of this formal, reverent service and observed that no one was "waving."

Little children learn many things through their association with adults and with other children. They learn also from observation of their surroundings. They are keen observers, and so the things that they see and hear and touch are made a part of their experience. Sometimes their observation brings to them such factual knowledge as "Men are big and strong"; "David doesn't quarrel when he plays"; "Fishes don't drown in the water"; "It's all right to scatter papers over the church-school floor. All the children do it," or (where their observation has taken place in more favorable surroundings) "A church-school room is a beautiful room. It is nice and clean and pretty."

Sometimes the observation results in imitation. A child admires Daddy, who is "big and strong," and so tries to be like him. It often amuses an observer to see how quickly he imitates the tones of voice and the very gestures of those with whom he associates. In fact, he goes beyond this and imitates the very conduct. This

might be viewed happily, if the voice, the gesture, the conduct were always worthy of imitation, but oftentimes this is not true.

Lucy learns to hold her fork as Mother does, and learns to speak in Aunt Lucy's whining tone of voice.

Ned learns to bow his head when Miss B. talks to the heavenly Father from seeing what the others do.

A little boy learns to swear from a workman on his street.

A little girl learns to dislike her pastor from conversation of adults at the dinner table.

A child learns to speak softly from listening to his mother and father.

A little boy learns to quarrel from two playmates next door.

A child learns to lift the baby carefully by watching his older sister.

A little girl learns to fear storms by living with a fearful auntie.

Children learn also from observation of their surroundings. The great out-of-doors that speaks of God's creations—the trees, the flowers, the animals, the sun and moon, the myriads of stars—helps the little child to learn. The order or lack of order, the beauty or lack of beauty of the homes and church schools in which little children are placed are powerful teachers, even though those who are responsible may not be conscious of the fact.

A child learns to love the sea from daily association with it in all of its moods.

A child learns to know and love the songs of the birds because he spends a month each summer in a woodland cottage.

A boy begins to learn trust and forgiveness from his dog.

A boy may feel a reaching-out after spiritual things because he associates constantly with the picture "The Infant Samuel" which hangs on the wall across from his bed.

A little child questions, "Who?" when she sees the evening star ablaze in the eastern sky.

Acting on Suggestion—

One Sunday morning the children were overstimulated and became too noisy. They decided to play church, and the leader was much concerned lest the "church service" should suffer from thoughtlessness. So she said, suiting the action to the words,

"Very softly I will walk,
Very gently I will talk,
When to church I go."[1]

Then she said, "Mary, show me how you walk when you go to church," and, as was to be expected, Mary walked very softly. The other children were given an opportunity to imitate also.

It will be noted that the teacher in this case did not trust to observation alone. She felt the need of the power of suggestion.

"Big boys take off their hats in the house," will often solve the hat question.

"Look at Mary's tree. You can see the wind blowing it," will most likely result in at least an attempt at something resembling trees, as the little artists wield the crayons.

Suggestions which cannot be named, much less classified, come to children on every hand. It is easy for them to learn through suggestion because it is an indirect method. It leaves to the learner the power to make his own choices—a prerogative which is clung to tenaciously, even in the early years.

For example, John hears a story of "Ben," a boy of his own age who puts away his toys, wipes the mud from his shoes, and, in many ways, exhibits a spirit of helpfulness. No moral is tacked on, but John thinks to him-

[1]Used by permission of the American Baptist Publication Society.

self, "I'm going to be like Ben." Thus through the power of suggestion he learns to admire helpfulness, and through his natural tendency to imitate he begins to practice this virtue, and a happy mother reports to the church-school teacher, "I don't know what has done it, but John is learning to be helpful."

Assimilating Information—

It is well for us to understand that in the newer methods of teaching there is a definite place for information given to the learner by the teacher. We have said so much about indirect methods of learning that many enthusiasts may leave learners groping for information which only a thoughtful adult can supply. Of course all information is not given by adults. Little children are assimilating information on every side from thoughtful and thoughtless adults and from thoughtful and thoughtless children. We use the word "assimilating" advisedly, because a child is often "exposed" to information which does not become a part of him. It often unfortunately (or fortunately) falls on heedless ears or eyes, and is not assimilated. If the learner has some reason to desire the particular information given, he is apt to assimilate it, or make it a part of himself. As a rule, he shows this desire or readiness through questions. On the other hand, a little child may fire so many questions, one after another, that he does not have time to assimilate the information he receives. The following is an example of a typical conversation in which questions followed each other so rapidly that assimilation is doubtful.

Question: "What street is this?"
Information: "This is Seminary Avenue."
Question: "Are those trees like the ones at Grandpa's house?"
Information: "No, Grandpa's are elms—these are lindens."

Question: "What makes the leaves fall off?"

Information: "God has made it so that the leaves fall off many trees. In this way the trees can rest in the cold winter time."

Question: "Will some new leaves come?"

Information: "Yes, when the sun shines warm in the spring these trees will have new green leaves. God has made it so."

How much do you think the questioner has learned? Probably not "Seminary Avenue," and "lindens." He may remember that the trees are not like the ones at Grandpa's house. If in the near future he has another association with falling leaves he will probably connect God with them. The information regarding new leaves will need some recall, if spring is far distant, but we think it has made sufficient impression to form at least a step in learning. We base this supposition on the fact that he asked no second question about the name of the street or the name of the trees, and made no comment on either.

Sometimes the expression on the face of a little child shows a desire or readiness for certain information. A true teacher will sense this need or desire and give the needed information. Perhaps one of the most difficult problems in teaching is to decide "when" and "how much" and "how" to give information. There may be exceptions, but it seems safe to say that if we want to assure ourselves that the information we give will be assimilated we had best give it only in response to a question or to some other indication of readiness.

It is true that, oftentimes, a mental and spiritual "readiness" may have to be brought about so that the information can be received by the child as a part of his experience. For example, the information "God cares for His children at all times—in the happy daytime and in the quiet nighttime" will not be accepted by the

child unless it is made a part of his experience; so we help him to build up a background or readiness for this information. Perhaps we look at pictures of the nighttime, possibly of a little child asleep; we play that it is the happy daytime; in imagination the dark has come, and we are going to sleep; a lullaby of God's care is sung; after a few minutes we wake and listen to the story of God's care of Jacob, and sing "How Strong and Sweet My Father's Care." After this the information "God cares for His children at all times—in the happy daytime and in the quiet nighttime" is really assimilated. It is really a part of the children's imaginary experience, which is, of course, very close to a little child's real life—so close that in many cases the information is taken over into his everyday or everynight experience.

It is well for those of us who are given to "much speaking" to remember that a child learns through the information which he uses, rather than through that which he hears.

Reasoning—

Nancy Elizabeth was five years old. Her Christmas doll had not only filled her heart with delight but had started an interesting train of thought.

"If I am Dollie's mother, what are you?" she asked of her mother.

"I must be her grandmother," was the answer of the mother with imagination.

"And Daddy is the grandfather," the little five-year-old continued. "Who is Frederick?" (Her older brother.)

"He must be her uncle," the mother patiently co-operated.

When the older sister was classified as Dollie's aunt, a thoughtful look came into Nancy Elizabeth's eyes and she said, "Well, Santa Claus must be Dollie's 'God' for he made her."

A little child is not always credited with the power to reason, and yet very early in life he begins to act on a

reasoning basis. He cries. Mother takes him up; and so the next time he wants to be taken up he cries again. Five years later he goes to the table without washing his face and reasons that he may escape the usual penalty of going back to the bathroom—because once Mother did not send him.

Many of the mistakes which children make are caused by learning through reasoning when they have not sufficient data on which to base their reasoning, or because they are not yet experienced enough to assimilate certain facts that have been presented to them or to which they have been "exposed." All reasoning is linked with observation. The child who learned that "David doesn't quarrel when he plays" made the connection between the two. He had played with David several times happily. He observed at those times that David did not try to grab his toys or quarrel, and so, reason stepped in and deduced that "David doesn't quarrel when he plays."

Some grown-ups expect little children to be reasonable beings from an adult standpoint, and are disappointed when they do not find them so. Some adults, on the other hand, are wise enough to build on the child's ability to reason in a limited way. It is only when we realize the possibilities, as well as the limitations, of a little child's reasoning that we can make the most of this ability in his religious education. Perhaps one day we will talk to him of the kindest person we know, and say, "He is something like God." Another day we will introduce him to the most helpful person we know and say, "She is something like God." Again we will show him the things God has made, and talk to him of His care. All the time the child's reason is functioning, and by and by he reasons "God is good." Not because you make him say so, but because you help him to think so. He has learned through reasoning.

Acting on Precept—

We are using the word "precept" in the broad acceptation of the term, as admitted by the dictionary, "instruction or direction regarding a given course." This interpretation will include such injunctions as "Walk on the gravel walk," or even its negative, "Do not walk on the grass," as well as such maxims as "Children, obey your parents" and "Be ye kind one to another."

At times Jesus used precepts in his teaching, although it is interesting to search the Gospels and find how much of His teaching was by example and by suggestion. He was content to have His listeners learn from many of His parables through suggestion. Most of the Beatitudes are examples of this type of teaching. Many times, however, the Master Teacher's words rang out directly, as "Go and do thou likewise," and "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

This method of learning should be handled skillfully. Too often, in the past, it has been overemphasized and abused. It should, if possible, follow, and not precede other methods. If we are thoughtful in our teaching we can often avoid the necessity for resorting to its use. Such injunctions as "Walk on the gravel walk" need to be used rarely, if ever, by a skillful teacher. The best way to help children to walk on the gravel walk instead of on the grass is to let them observe you as you carefully avoid the grass. To this you may add the suggestion, "I am very careful to walk on the gravel walk because I want the grass to look pretty and green as it does now. I do not want it to look crushed and dry and dull." It may be, however, that after you have done your best through example (observation) and suggestion, some thoughtless child will be helped in his learning when a playmate, impressed by his carelessness, calls out, "Don't walk on the grass! You're making it look ugly!" Shall

we not try every other means of learning before we resort to "precept"?

Incentives to Learning

WHAT IS it that causes Lenox to learn to ride a velocipede? Observation of other children has something to do with his desire to learn, but on the other hand he has not the same desire to do everything he sees done, and so "observation" is not alone responsible. There is something in him—something that drives him irresistibly to attempt the fascinating experience of putting his hands on the bars and working his feet up and down. He is eager to see if he can "make it go, too." He wants to learn to ride a velocipede and so, without doubt, he can and will learn.

Wanting to learn is the biggest essential in the learning process. No amount of desire to teach on the part of the teacher will make up for a keen desire to learn on the part of the learner. There must be a drive from within—a something that we call "readiness"—before learning can take place. This inward urge, desire, drive, or "readiness," is sometimes responsible for amazing feats of learning, such as that reported some time ago by a well-known university president, who, to prove his conviction that "any one can learn to do anything if he really wants to do it, with all his heart," learned in an incredibly short time to play the violin as the result of a friendly challenge of his theory.

Of course there are various ways of bringing about readiness. Some of them are good, and some are not. A wise teacher is needed to distinguish between good and bad incentives, and a wiser teacher is needed to decide between a "better" and a "best" incentive—an incentive that rightly motivates learning. For example, there are several possible incentives or ways of causing a child to

want to say the Bible verse, "God is my helper." The first, and absolutely wrong, incentive is that of competition, and yet it is quite easy to cause a child to want to repeat the verse because another child has done so. Egoism may also cause him to want to repeat the verse because "Miss Margaret [a visitor] should like to see how well you can say it," but this also is not a high incentive. Can we not discover some way of helping him to want to know the verse because of what the verse will mean to him in his daily life? Better still, can we not discover the need for help that already has a place in his heart? We can link the verse with a situation which we have pictured for him in words—a situation in which some other child used it naturally. We can say, "There are many times when I, too, love to think 'God is my helper'; I say it over and over again, 'God is my helper.' Perhaps you will want to say the words softly with me, so that many times this week you can say them to yourself." We shall then find that there is a "readiness," not only to say the words, but to accept the comfort conveyed in the words.

In most learning experiences the incentive to learn is not fostered by an adult who is consciously teaching. The natural curiosity of a child leads him into avenues of investigation and achievement through which he learns daily. It is for us to follow him in his learning, and to discover and use the "readiness" which is already driving him forward.

The Importance of Practice

ALL THAT we have said in our discussion of the various, integrated ways of learning has taken into account the fact that learning is dependent upon practice. Even an urgent desire or "readiness" to learn does not take the place of practice. Lenox was ready to learn to ride a velocipede, but un-

til he climbed on the seat, put his hands on the handlebar and his feet on the pedals, and began to use his muscles, he had not learned to ride. Even then a great deal of repetition was needed before he had acquired enough skill to say, "I can ride a velocipede." Neither has a child learned to be helpful just because, through a story or conversation about helpfulness, he feels a "readiness" or urge toward unselfish service. It is only when he has a chance to practice or find an outlet for his commendable desire that he has learned to be helpful. And, as in the case of the velocipede, it is only after much repetition that he acquires sufficient skill to deserve to be known as a helpful child. We are happy, of course, when a child makes one right response, but we cannot be sure that he will always make the same response, even in a similar situation. Teaching would, in one sense, be easier if this were the case.

Shall we not give our children many opportunities to practice right religious responses and shall we not safeguard them against practicing undesirable responses? Thus we can help them in their learning.

The following outline may help us to summarize our discussion of how children learn:

Recognizing { *readiness* / *effect* / *practice* } as essential,

Children learn through—

Trial and Success or Error.
Observation of People and Surroundings.
Acting on Suggestion.
Assimilating Information.
Reasoning.
Acting on Precept.

EDUCATIONAL procedure would not be so complicated were it not for the fact that a child learns many things at one time. On the other hand, because this is true, it is much more interesting to watch the all-round character development that comes as a result.

Learning Many Things at One Time

An illustration of learning many things at once is found in a project carried on by a Kindergarten group in a vacation church school. They decided to make a gift for their pastor. The teacher thought of it primarily as a project in building up a happy relationship between the group and the minister. The children were very happy in learning to share with their minister, but they were also learning many other things. Their immediate attention was focused on making the cushion. They learned how to cut irregular pieces of oilcloth for the flowers and how to tear paper in small bits to serve as "stuffing."

Doubtless, if any child had been asked as he reached home, "What did you learn today?" the answer would have been, "I learned to tear paper and cut flowers for a cushion." In many cases the parent who received this answer doubtless might think, "And they call that teaching religion!" Perhaps this same parent might have felt quite differently if he had received the teacher's answer to "What did your children learn today?" This teacher would have said, "They learned to think more of their minister. They are beginning to learn the valuable lesson of co-operation. They could not all have the scissors at one time, nor could they all do the same things, and so they found that by putting all their efforts together the result was something beautiful. They would not know the word 'co-operation' if they heard it, but nevertheless they are learning to co-operate."

Co-operation, of course, is most valuable, but it was not the attitude the leader set out to develop. It came about as part of the project. It was a necessary part of the lessons which the making of the cushion taught—affection for their pastor, a desire to share with him, and loyalty to their church.

The skeptical parent would perhaps have been better satisfied if he had heard Marjory as she said, "I'm glad I helped to make the cushion for Mr. MacLean. It makes me think about him and about the church."

There are technical names for these various responses. Earnest students will be interested in making an exhaustive study of "primary responses" (manual skill) and "marginal responses" (co-operation, affection for the pastor and church, and a desire to share). We can, here, only point the way to a more thorough study of one of the most important aspects of learning.

IT IS significant that in the very wording of the heading of this chapter the emphasis has been put upon the learner.

The Teacher's Part

The teacher, it is true, is important—important because, if she is a true teacher, she stands ready to share a wealth of experience, to guide little learners into situations where they will grow in knowledge and experience, situations where they may repeatedly live the things they are learning until they habitually do right because it is pleasing to God.[2]

IN THE learning of spiritual things we should not minimize the work of God's Spirit, without which the

[2]The teacher's part in the learning experiences of children will be treated further in chapters 3 and 4.

God's Part

spiritual could never be taught. He is our Teacher. He does, however, often work through other people and in the circumstances that surround His children. We, who are teachers, may be co-workers with Him. What a happy, fascinating work it is to which we are called—to stand with Him and help little children in their learning!

For Further Study

We have integrated the three laws of learning—readiness, effect, and exercise—with the whole problem under discussion. "Readiness" was discussed under "Incentives to Learning"; "Effect" was discussed under "Ways of Learning" in discussing trial and success or error; and "Exercise" was discussed under "The Importance of Practice." As a matter of fact, all of them are operative in any learning process.

Students who desire to go into a further study of these laws will find help in Dr. Kilpatrick's *Foundations of Method.*

For Assignment and Discussion

(*Choose one or more.*)

1. Can you teach a child to be reverent through precept? Through imitation? (Explain your method.)

2. Give an illustration of teaching through "Suggestion."

3. Mary is an only child. She is lacking in the ability to co-operate. What "learning" situations would you endeavor to find for her in order that she may develop this valuable character trait?

4. Do the same laws of learning operate in Christian education as in all other education?

5. According to the laws of learning what is the best way to teach the Bible verse, "Be ye kind one to another"?

6. In studying the different ways in which children learn, do you discover that any one of them has been neglected in your teaching?

7. Viewed from the standpoint of the church school, is any one way of learning of more importance than others? Give reasons for your answer.

8. Give a word picture of any learning experience on the part of a little child or a group of children. Note the ways of learning which entered into this experience.

9. In the following results of learning experiences, note the ways of learning which must have entered into the experience.

She Learned to Deceive

Four children were given paper and large crayons, a different color to each child. N. M. soon asked for a different color still. When asked to give up the first piece she said that she put it on the table. No crayon was visible, so she said she lost it. On being told she must find it before receiving another, she said it was "too lost." Then I helped her search for it, and finally she hung her head and eased up some magazines so I could see the crayon broken in half. When I questioned her, she said it dropped and she didn't want anybody to know she broke it so she hid it so I couldn't find it for a "long time." I asked her why she finally told me where it was, and she said, "You wouldn't give me any more until that was found. I'm sorry I said it was lost."

This child had been playing recently with a little boy who often said, "It's fun to pretend you don't know, then Mother gets awful mad." Previously she was very free, even when at fault, to confess.—*Reported by a neighbor.*

She Had Not Learned Her Part

A child five years of age was playing on a back street and came into the house at frequent intervals. The mother, knowing about the congested traffic, said to the child, "I am afraid you will be run over if you continue to play out in the back."

The child's answer was, "Don't worry, Mother, I'm not afraid. God will take care of me."—*Reported by a teacher.*

Note.—It is possible that this child had learned only a part of the lesson of God's protecting care. She had learned to trust her heavenly Father to take care of her, but had she learned that she also had a responsibility which she must meet by helping to take care of herself?

Properly balanced teaching will show the child that there are times when she can and should help God.

Helpful Books

TEACHING FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING, *Vieth.*
HOW SHALL I LEARN TO TEACH RELIGION? *Carrier.*
FOUNDATIONS OF METHOD, *Kilpatrick.*
THE CHILD-CENTERED SCHOOL, *Rugg and Shumaker.*
HOW CHILDREN LEARN, *Freeman.*
AN ADVENTURE WITH CHILDREN, *Lewis.*
SIMPLIFYING TEACHING, *Reeder.*

CHAPTER III

A Group of Children and Leaders

Then said a teacher, "Speak to us of teaching."

And he said, "No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge."

"The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom, but rather of his faith and lovingness.

"If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.

"The astronomer may speak to you of his understanding of space, but he cannot give you understanding.

"The musician may sing to you of the rhythm which is in all space, but he cannot give you the ear which arrests the rhythm nor the voice that echoes it.

"And he who is versed in the science of numbers can tell of the regions of weight and measure, but he cannot conduct you thither.

"For, the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man. And even as each of you stands alone in God's knowledge, so must each of you be alone in his knowledge of God and his understanding of the earth."

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The Group

IN THE two previous chapters we have discussed "Our Purpose in Teaching Little Children" and "How Little Children Learn." We have visualized groups of Kindergarten children and called attention to the fact that the children were approximately four and five years of age; and we intimated an ideal number to be included in a group; but it seems important that we spend a short time in thinking of what

is meant by "approximately"—in other words, that we agree somewhat on a basis of grading a Kindergarten, and that we discuss the size of the group.

The Basis of Grading—

The basis of grading should not be age alone. A child should be placed in the church school in the group of children whose development and interests are in line with his development and interests, in order that he may work happily and worship sincerely with them. The only reason we say "children of approximately four and five years of age may be grouped in a Kindergarten" is that, as a rule, most children in a given community or neighborhood who have reached their fourth birthday have lived through similar experiences. Having lived four years in the world, they have played with the same kind of toys, mastered similar vocabularies, developed somewhat the same degree of skill in manual dexterity, and often they have enjoyed the same social contacts. There are, however, many children who are four years of age chronologically who have not developed mentally and socially to the degree which makes them at home with other four-year-old children. On the other hand, there are children whose development places them naturally with children older than themselves.

There is, of course, a decided difference between children who are four years of age and those who are five years old. The whole question of the best grouping is, and has been for a number of years, under consideration. The present practice is, in small Kindergartens, to group the four and five-year-old children together.

After a child in the Nursery Department has passed his fourth birthday, he is, if normally developed, ready for the Kindergarten. Some leaders think it wise to promote these children in a group on the first Promo-

tion Day following the fourth birthday. Some of us recommend that the children enter the Kindergarten individually as the birthday is reached. Thus they are, perhaps, more easily "absorbed" by the group.

A warning is sometimes necessary against the practice of bringing Nursery children into the Kindergarten before they are four years of age. A period of a few weeks, at this age, is an important consideration.

An important factor to be taken into account in the best grouping of children is the public-school grouping, in case the public school includes a kindergarten. Note the development of the children who attend the public-school kindergarten. Church schools situated in communities where children do not enter the first grade in the public school at six years should take this into consideration when promoting.

The question sometimes arises, "What shall we do with the six-year-old child who has not had any public-school experience?" In many cases this child will be more at home in the Kindergarten group, but there can be no hard and fast rule. Watch his social responses and carefully observe his development in skills, and place him where he will be happiest.

Another important question is, "When you are attempting to teach too many children in a Kindergarten group, and have available rooms to warrant division into two departments, do you put your four-year-old children in one group and your five-year-old children in another, or do you mix them?" There is a difference of opinion on this point. Some feel that the advantages of separation into two age-groups outweigh the disadvantages, and advise this separation in large departments. Others feel that the four-year-old children learn so much from the five-year-old children that two mixed groups are preferable.

Standards of Promotion—

Kindergarten children are promoted to the Primary Department, as a rule, in a group.

What do we expect of a little child who is ready to be promoted to the Primary Department? Shall our standard of promotion be on the basis of age, knowledge, skills, social adjustments, or shall it rather be a combination of all these?

Perhaps a combination of a number of different evidences of development should influence our thinking as to whether or not a child is ready for the Primary Department. Certainly knowledge alone should not qualify a child for promotion. The ability to repeat certain Bible verses and tell certain stories is not a safe measuring rod of achievement. Care should be taken that the child who has been overfed mentally should not be pushed too rapidly. He is more apt to suffer from overstimulation than an average child.

If we were asked to select a few of the most indicative bases of measuring the development of a Kindergarten child, we should select such achievements as the ability to take care of belongings, the ability to follow directions reasonably well (both individual and group directions), and an evidenced desire to co-operate with other children in work and play enterprises.

All that we have said, however, does not indicate just what we desire our children to be and to do before they leave the Kindergarten. Ideally we should have a measuring rod which could measure Christian attitudes and conduct accurately, but there is no such instrument. It is true, however, that even if we possessed an instrument to register the fact that John has developed in thoughtfulness for others and in the practice of obedience and in reverence, and to tell us that Ned has made no progress in these important virtues, the problem of

promotion would not be solved. The fact remains that if Ned fits into the group activities which interest John, he can probably best be taught by allowing him to be promoted with John and the other boys of his age. As times goes on, certain skills—such as the ability to read or write—will have to play an important part in promotion, but in the case of a Kindergarten child his happy adjustment to the group and its activities does not depend on such abilities.

Knowledge has its place as a basis of promotion in that it affects skills and social adjustments, and all conduct. It is, therefore, desirable that our children should know and love a number of Bible stories and verses and songs, and so forth, associated with life. It is desirable that a Primary superintendent should be able to take it for granted that most of the children who come to her do know these materials, but, as we have said before, "knowledge" should not be the standard of promotion. When a child has reached the age of six years and is properly adjusted socially, he should be promoted to the Primary Department. A reasonably safe rule is to select for promotion the children of average development who are six years of age, or who will be six years of age within three months of the annual Promotion Day, and who will soon be in the first grade in the public school.

The Number in a Kindergarten—

The number in a Kindergarten should be given careful consideration.

There was a time when a Kindergarten superintendent was wont to say rather proudly, "I have fifty children in my department!" Now, if she makes this statement, she makes it apologetically, for she realizes that no teacher can do informal work with a group of fifty chil-

dren or help adequately in their development.[1] Perhaps she adds, "Our church is going to build another room or make two rooms of our present room, as soon as it can, so that we may divide our children into two groups."

The ideas of educators change from time to time regarding the ideal number in a Kindergarten. There should be enough children for social contacts and chances for living together, and yet there should not be so many that the individual is lost in the group and has no chance for individual development. Perhaps the ideal group is not less than twelve children and not more than fifteen.

When the group begins to number more than twenty children, it is time to think of the possibility of finding or building another room with a view to dividing the group into two groups or departments. However, there are enrolled in many of our departments more than the ideal number for informal teaching, and for many years this situation must be met. The question asked by superintendents of these large departments is, "Shall we subdivide into small classes?" The practice of subdividing into small classes is not recommended. Often there are times when the children may arrange themselves in small informal groups for occasional activities, such as certain types of manual work; looking at pictures, or picture books, bird's nests and other objects; and engaging in conversation related to their activities. But, even in large departments, there should be a sense of unity in these activities that take place in the same room. There should be a time when the leader sits down with the whole group to tell a story, or engage in conversation in which all are interested, to sing songs, or play games. The number in a group will greatly influence the leader in her plans for grouping. She should think first of the

[1]It is of interest to read in Edersheim's *In the Days of Christ* that "more than twenty-five pupils or thereabouts a schoolmaster was not allowed to teach in a class."

desired outcomes for which she is striving, and then decide which activities can best be developed in the group as a whole, which can best be developed in small groups under the leadership of assistants, and which lend themselves to individual participation. We often make the mistake of falling into a set method of grouping, without realizing that no one plan will suit every situation. The activities of one week may lend themselves to one method, while our purpose may best be accomplished the next week by an entirely different plan.

Where a Kindergarten is too large for informal learning, and where it is not possible for the church to find two available rooms which make possible a division into two groups, the same room may be used at different times by each group. In this case one group meets during the church-school hour and the other during the hour for morning worship. In making such a division, the convenience of the parents should be taken into account, as the hour for adult worship will be much more convenient for some, while the church-school hour will be the choice of others. There is, in most cases, no reason why each may not have a choice.

Professional Qualifications—

The Superintendent-Teacher

IT WILL be recalled that in the word pictures given in Chapter I there was in each case an adult leader. It is true that the two leaders were not at all alike. Their ideas of leadership were fundamentally different, and yet each was trying in her own way to fulfill her duty as she saw it. The teacher in *Picture Number Two* had a rather narrow conception of leadership. She felt that it was her duty to subject the children to a certain bit of, what seemed to her, valuable routine, always taking occasion to tell a Bible story as a part of the routine. This story con-

tained worth-while knowledge, which all children should have. Her sense of duty was satisfied when this knowledge was given, even though, at times, its reception was uncertain. "At any rate," she thought, "I have done my duty."

The teacher in *Picture Number One* had a broader conception of leadership. She thought of herself as one who had lived many more years than the children she taught. Consequently, in her living she had acquired, from time to time, worth-while knowledge which she dearly loved to share with her children when they were ready for it. She knew that they needed some one wiser, more patient, more resourceful than they; some one who could help them at the right moment to interpret their experiences and enrich them—in other words, some one to lead them—for, as we have intimated, the teacher cannot calmly wait in every instance for children to learn with no adult help, although in most cases waiting would be a virtue. She has very definite responsibilities. Shall we consider a few of them?

1. *She should be prepared to lead a child or a group of children into situations which foster learning.*

It is much easier for children to learn in some homes than in others. The whole atmosphere of certain homes invites learning. There are books and pictures which stimulate children to conversation. There are happy times when Father and Mother invite questions. There are pets to care for, chores to be done, flowers to tend, dolls to put to sleep, family prayers, and quiet bedtime talks. Such a home is a teaching home—a home where it is easy for children to learn. The learning situations are largely the result of the planning of the parents.

In the church school the teacher often has to lead her children into situations where they will want to learn.

Perhaps she desires to teach them to play happily together. She takes them out of doors for a playtime and guides them in their activity. She wants them to know children of the other races, so she invites a little Japanese child to be their guest for the day. She wants them to feel a love and reverence for the church, and so she leads them into an experience which results naturally in their doing something for their own church room. One day they go softly into the church auditorium when only the pastor is there. This experience fosters learning.

2. *She should be keen to grasp teaching opportunities provided by the children themselves.*

No cut-and-dried program will take the place of the type of teaching that arises from the children themselves.

One of the happiest times in a vacation school was a day when the imagination of the children turned the chairs unexpectedly into a railroad train, and our rather prosaic recall of songs was quickly turned into "When you look out of the window of the train see if you can see anything that makes you think of one of our songs."

All of us have these pleasant memories, but we often have to balance against them the memory of the many times when we failed the children—times when their imaginations or suggestions were better than ours and we failed to grasp our teaching opportunities.

3. *She should answer all questions of the learner with real understanding and wisdom.*

This presupposes a vital religious experience. If she is not a sincere Christian herself, she cannot lead others into a Christian experience. The little children will not, of course, understand that her acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and Lord makes her a better teacher, but they can understand that she loves God, our heavenly Father, and Jesus, His Son, and that while she encourages her

children to Christian conduct, she herself is trying each day to do the things which she knows are pleasing to God. All of this will be intangibly felt by little children, and will be one of the greatest factors in her influence on the group.

All-important, however, as this radiant Christian personality is, she needs a background of knowledge, and what we may, for want of a better term, call "specialized experience"—experience in dealing with the problems of childhood. Some day a little child is going to ask her trustingly, "Who made God?" or in a puzzled tone, "I asked God to give me a baby brother, and he didn't. Why didn't he?" while another voices the world-old query, "Why doesn't God let some rain come down? It's so dusty." She must not only know a great many things, but she must know how to translate her information into terms that a child can understand. She must know also when to say frankly, "There are some things that no one knows but God."

4. *She should be ready to supply information and precept when needed.*

Sometimes children do not ask questions, and yet the wise teacher senses a need.

I wonder if Miss Dixon in her charming book *Children Are Like That* has not given us a picture of the function of the teacher. In reporting the happenings of the day she says:

> "Francis Pim pulls the big express cart around the yard, his small strong legs straining with effort. In the bottom are treasures: a little worn purse and a rusty tin funnel. A playmate mysteriously seems to know that he'd like some pebbles in the funnel so he gives him a handful as he passes."[2]

If we, as teachers, could mysteriously know when our children should "like some pebbles in the funnel" we

[2]Used by permission of John Day Co., Inc., Publishers.

could come nearer measuring up to the true office of a teacher. Children need certain information and precepts that they will never demand vocally, and we, as teachers, should sense this need. For example, their thought of God needs to grow as they grow in experience, and so one day when the time seems ripe the wise leader will say, "I know a beautiful song about God"; or, without any introduction, she tells a story that broadens each little hearer's concept.[3] It is not easy for us to keep our hearts and minds atune to a little child's need, but it can be done, and when it is the little learner will receive our contribution as naturally and readily as did Francis Pim the gift from his friend.

5. *She should use and provide frequent opportunities for practicing what is being learned.*

The necessity for repetition or frequent practice in learning has been discussed. Naturally, the responsibility for using and providing opportunities for the practice of Christian conduct rests on both teacher and parents. Oftentimes the teacher can do little more than help to create right attitudes, which by co-operation with the home will result in the right conduct, and if repeated again and again will result in right habits. It is the teacher's responsibility to keep the parents informed when there is a special need for practice at home, so that opportunities may be provided.

The wise teacher will seize and make opportunities in the Sunday, weekday, and vacation sessions of the group for practicing religion. Play situations present excellent opportunities for this. Willingness to take turns, to share, to be friendly, and to co-operate may grow and develop in a Christian way under a wise leader. There is no more important responsibility than that of

[3]Note the place of story and song in *Picture Number One,* Chapter I.

using, or guiding children into, situations in which they may choose to live religiously.

Personal Characteristics—

There are many intimate personal characteristics no one of which she who desires to be a true teacher can afford to ignore. Each, like one of the colors which make up the prism, contributes to the white light of her complete personality.

1. *She should be young in spirit.*

The question is often asked, "How old should a Kindergarten teacher be?"

Age is not altogether a matter of years. A Kindergarten teacher should be young enough in spirit and young enough physically to enter enthusiastically into the enterprises of little children. If she has forgotten how to play and is too old to learn, she is not a suitable teacher for these little people who have numerous muscles with which to wiggle, but not one with which to sit still, and imaginations so vivid that they live in a veritable play world.

Educational methods change through the years. Perhaps no generation has seen more rapid and radical changes in method than we have seen in the past few years. If a teacher has reached the age when she says or feels, "I have always done thus in the past. I do not propose to change," she had better take note. It is possible that she is too old to teach Kindergarten children. This is not to be confused with an unchanging attitude toward truth, which, of course, is desirable. Methods vary but truth does not. We grow in our understanding of truth. As our conception enlarges, we find the need for newer and better methods of helping others to see and feel what we see and feel, or, better still, of helping them to see and feel beyond what we see and feel.

A Kindergarten teacher, on the other hand, should not be too young. She should be old enough to have a rich background of knowledge, and enough experience and professional training to guarantee sound judgment in dealing with the situations which arise. This judgment is not a matter of age, but certainly few young women under twenty years of age can qualify.

2. *She should be friendly and courteous.*

A genuine friendliness cannot be counterfeited. A gushing manner is not a substitute. Neither is spasmodic friendliness sufficient. Each child should feel, "When something pleasant happens, I want to tell my teacher about it, for she is my friend. When I am unhappy I will tell her about it, and she will be sorry, for she is my friend." In other words, her thoughtful, impartial friendliness is big enough to embrace every child in the group. She is really interested in Jack's new coat, Joe's stumped toe, and Carol's new brother. This friendliness presupposes an innate courtesy which dignifies the concerns of the children and accords the same consideration to little children which would be expected and received by adults.

3. *She should be happy.*

"She may be good, but I should hate to live with her."

Have you not occasionally met people of whom this criticism reminds you?

There are certain teachers who are conscientiously trying to be everything else except "happy." Children do not like to be with them. Contrast such a one with Jesus, the Master Teacher, who, on the eve of His greatest sorrow, could say, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you."

A teacher of children should radiate joy and good cheer, because little folks quickly catch her spirit.

4. *She should have a pleasant voice and a pleasing manner.*

Some one has said, "In general, it may be said that personality finds its natural expression through the voice and manner, and that defects in these avenues mean lowered efficiency for whatever other resources one may have in the way of personality."[4]

If this is true, every teacher of Kindergarten children should cultivate a pleasing voice and manner. By "cultivate" we do not mean for her to assume what is not her own. There is nothing more undesirable than the use of unnatural tones of voice and the adoption of an unnatural manner. However, the teacher can cultivate the graces which should result in a voice and manner which are pleasing.

5. *She should be dependable.*

"She is a good teacher, but we can't depend on her" is a distressing comment on a weakness in character. This teacher is often late for church school. She sometimes promises that she and her helpers will provide the program for the general monthly leaders' conference, but in some way she neglects to confer with her helpers; and the quickly-arranged, last-minute program is far from a success. She promises to make arrangements just before Christmas for the suitable reception of the children's Christmas toys by the city missionary, but she forgets until Sunday morning. Her frantic telephoning at the last minute finds the city missionary "tied up" with another duty. And so the story continues. Little things which might seem trivial, were they not so indicative of character, are constantly brought to light to show that she is not really dependable.

The children must have a safe feeling of trust in their teacher, knowing that what she promises she will fulfill

[4]Frank W. Thomas in *Principles and Technique of Teaching.*

and that when a need or a crisis arises they can count on her, for she has never failed them: she is dependable.

6. *She should be calm and patient.*

Perhaps there is no department where calmness and poise are more needed than in a Kindergarten. The flurried, hurried teacher has no place here. Children so quickly catch and react to nervousness or uncertainty that it takes only a few minutes for a nervous teacher to find that she is teaching nervous children.

"Why is it," a mother asked in genuine distress, "that on the days when I feel out of sorts and tired and nervous the children seem to be so trying?" The answer is self-evident. It applies in the church school as it does in the home.

It is wonderfully restful to fall under the influence of a teacher whose outward poise is the result of inward calm; who gives one the assurance of her absolute preparedness to meet the various situations which arise with promptness and decision, but with calmness and patience. Perhaps patience is just "poise" and "calm" in action, as it were. The calm teacher is apt to wait patiently for a little child to handle a picture or adjust his words or to find his "money" or put the flowers in the vase. She knows when to say in effect "time is up" —for little people do have to be reminded and should not be allowed to loiter—but she says it with so much calmness and patience that her decision is not often disputed.

It is not easy to acquire calmness. For some of us it may require a complete change in disposition, but it is worth striving for earnestly and patiently.

7. *She should be humble.*

Some one has said: "Humility is a virtue that when named as one's own ceases so to be."

A Kindergarten teacher may be happy and grateful without being egotistical, as she views the success of her teaching. In fact, we need an adequate amount of humility rightly to gauge our so-called successes. An egotistical teacher sees through a magnifying lens the results of her efforts and thus disqualifies herself as a judge of her own teaching. May our constant prayer be, "Lord, give us grace to give to Thee the glory for the achievements wrought through us; keeping for ourselves the joy which comes from success, uncankered by the rust of egotism."

8. *She should be efficient and resourceful.*

A helpless person who leans too much on others should not superintend a Kindergarten. Friendliness, courtesy, happiness, dependability, and poise should be linked with real ability to do well what is undertaken.

There are certain people who, one instinctively knows, will always creditably execute any task they assume. If they hem towels the stitches will be even. If they mount pictures the margins will be accurate. If they play tennis the balls generally hit on the right side of the net. If they make a committee report it is apt to be interesting and complete. In other words, they are efficient.

An efficient teacher will master the countless details of teaching procedure which constantly arise. She will study and experiment until she finds the best way of doing a thing, and will never be satisfied with mediocre achievement. When she combines with this efficiency the softening graces of friendliness, courtesy, and humility she is the type of person to whom grown-ups and children alike turn for counsel and advice.

9. *She should be co-operative.*

There are some people who are efficient and resourceful. They do things well when they do them alone, but they have never learned to work with others. There is friction and discord whenever teamwork is attempted. Until a Kindergarten superintendent can say "*Our* department" and "*Our* church school" happily, and mean it in the truest sense of the word, she is lacking in one of the essential qualifications of a teacher.

10. *She should be open-minded.*

A teacher of little children should be open-minded. Dr. Vieth says, in speaking of the experimental attitude:

> "If a modern Solomon were to utter the prayer of his deepest desire, he would do well to add to his petition for an understanding heart a request for an open mind. And if he were to become a teacher in the church school he would need a double portion of this blessing. Styles are constantly changing in teaching religion as in manner of dress. Christian convictions may be the same from age to age, but they must be applied to conditions which are ever new in a changing world. Our purpose with and for children may be the same today as yesterday, but our manner of dealing with children must change with the increase of knowledge of how learning takes place."[5]

11. *She should be refined and cultured.*

Anything coarse or crude, harsh or ugly, should be repulsive to a teacher of little children. Refinement is "purity of taste, mind, and morals," and there is no other place in the whole church where it is more important that the very essence of refinement should prevail than in the Kindergarten.

Culture is shown in dress, in the color scheme and arrangement of the room, in conversation, and in the very expression of the face and carriage of the body.

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[5]*Teaching for Christian Living*, Vieth. Bethany Press. Used by permission.

The white light of spiritual refinement is the sum total of all the other graces of a true Kindergarten teacher and can only be attained through a daily association with the "Crystal Christ."

Duties—

It is not easy to list in a complete way the duties of a Kindergarten superintendent-teacher, for the reason that after we think we have been fairly thorough, each individual will constantly find uncharted duties at hand as she learns to master the responsibilities of her position. It may be helpful, however, for us to discuss briefly some of the very evident duties for which she is responsible.

1. *She is responsible for the organization and administration of the department.*

"Organization" and "administration" are cold words. We should like, instead, to say that she is responsible for the entire "well-being" of the department. And yet, we cannot get away from the fact that, no matter how informal the work, there are certain definite duties necessary even to a flexible organization.

2. *She should help to select her assistants or "helpers" and should supervise their work.*

All teachers should be finally approved and really appointed by the highest court in the local church, but certainly the Kindergarten superintendent should have the privilege of nominating those whom she desires to help in the work of her department.

3. *She should recommend teaching materials for her department.*

A wise choice of teaching literature is of vital importance. If the Kindergarten superintendent is qualified for her work her recommendation of a suitable course

should have great weight. In fact, the word of such a teacher is generally accepted as the deciding voice by local church curriculum committees. For this reason it is important that she choose wisely.

4. *She is responsible for the program procedure for the entire session.*

The program of a Sunday, weekday, or vacation-school session should be a unit, the superintendent guiding the entire group of children in all activities. We shall later discuss the wisdom of delegating certain duties to assistants or helpers. There are times when occasional activities demand informal divisions of the whole group, but this is not a regular procedure. A unified procedure can best obtain where the superintendent-teacher leads the conversation, introduces the songs, tells the stories, and so forth.

5. *She is responsible for the arrangement of the room.*

While she is responsible for the arrangement of the room, this does not mean that this duty cannot be delegated. It means that in the interest of harmony she has to be the one who co-ordinates the various contributions. She may ask Mrs. K. to mount pictures, Mrs. Y. with the help of the children to be responsible for the flowers in vases, and others to make specific contributions; but she should delegate the responsibility to them, or, better still, the arrangement of the room may be planned by all and various duties chosen.

6. *She should keep personal records of the children.*

Of course the attendance records and records of gifts and birthdays in large departments should be kept by the secretary, but there are records which the superintendent should keep personally—records of the heredity and home environment as well as the responses of the children, which show their characteristics and needs, and

oftentimes show the successes or failures in her methods of teaching.

The plan of keeping a notebook of the children's responses and careful comments on these will help a teacher in many ways. First of all, it will help her to keep in mind the needs of the individual children. Then, too, it will help her to plan better to meet a similar situation with another group of children. For example, if she notes that Rachel could not be induced for many days to touch any handwork materials, she will be more apt to talk to Rachel's mother and find out the reason. If she notes that several of her children seemed puzzled at her use of the word "safe" in a certain story, she may better remember to avoid that word when she tells the story again or to make careful preparation for it ahead of time.

Certain items or records of this type are suitable to pass on to the Primary superintendent at the time of promotion. This knowledge may save the Primary superintendent from many mistakes.

7. *She should estimate the departmental budget for supplies.*

A well-organized church school must have some idea of the amount of money which is needed by each department for teaching literature, handwork materials, and other needed equipment. A Kindergarten superintendent may work through the secretary-treasurer, but she will be held responsible for the amount expended by her department, and should be prepared to give an estimate of the money needed.

8. *She should plan for Departmental Workers' Conferences.*

The superintendent is largely responsible for the spirit of co-operation and enthusiasm which makes a success-

ful workers' conference possible. It is her responsibility to call her group of helpers together at regular intervals for conference, and to plan with them the program for such a conference. She may call her assistants together frequently for informal conferences.[6]

9. *She should co-operate with other departments in plans for the General Workers' Conferences.*

Some Kindergarten superintendents, while meeting all obligations that have to do with their particular department, ignore their responsibility to other departments. There should often be occasion for interdepartmental activities. The various superintendents are largely responsible for this co-operation, and the Kindergarten superintendent should assume her share of the responsibility.

The Kindergarten superintendent should also feel responsible for her co-operation and the co-operation of her helpers in plans for the General Workers' Conferences.

10. *She should keep in touch with the homes represented in her department.*

She should know home conditions and if possible spend some part of her visiting time in the homes in informal, natural contacts with the children. She should keep the parents informed of all plans for the children, and as often as possible she should make these plans in co-operation with the parents. A discussion of "The Parents' Part" will be found in Chapter XII.

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[6]The Kindergarten Workers' Conference will be discussed more fully in Chapter IV under "Supervision."

For Assignment and Discussion

(*Choose one or more.*)

1. "The unique work of President Hoover as a leader was in so organizing vast enterprises that in them other men could express their highest possible capacity. He did not give orders, he provided them with opportunities."

Analyze carefully the above quotation from a newspaper correspondent and discuss any bearing which it may have on understanding and discuss any bearing of little children.

2. "John is only five years of age, but his playmates are, as a rule, boys older than he. He considers some of the things we do in the Kindergarten 'babyish' and he is no longer interested. What shall we do with him?"

3. "Louise is not quite six years of age. She is of about the average development for her age. We promote the first of October. Her birthday will come in December. Shall we promote her?"

4. Do five-year-old children who are attending day-school kindergarten work better with the four-year-olds or with the six-year-olds who are in the first grade in the day school?

5. The following may be used as a subject for debate:

"Resolved that it is better for the children promoted from the Nursery class to wait until Promotion Day and enter the Beginners' Department as a group."

6. Imagine that you are the Director of Religious Education in a local church. Write a letter to a prospective superintendent of a Kindergarten inviting her to take the leadership of the four and five-year-old children in your church.

7. Write a paper of not more than three hundred words in which you describe an ideal teacher of four and five-year-old children.

Helpful Books and Leaflets

PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Chapter XII, *Mossman.*

THE PROGRESSIVE PRIMARY TEACHER, Chapter IV, "The Teacher's Personality," *Stormzand and McKee.*

CURRICULUM-MAKING IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CHAPTER IV, *Lincoln School Staff.*

THE CHILD-CENTERED SCHOOL, *Rugg and Shumaker.*

DENOMINATIONAL AND INTERDENOMINATIONAL LEAFLETS AND PAMPHLETS.

CHAPTER IV

A Group of Children and Leaders (*Concluded*)

* * *

A Teacher of Religion

How dare I name myself as one
  Who goes the way to God?
As one who knows and walks the path
  Devoted feet have trod?

I cannot name myself as one
  Who never goes astray—
Who never stumbles on the road,
  Or never leaves the way.

But, when I know that baby feet
  Will follow where I've trod,
I walk with care that they may keep
  The road that leads to God.

Perhaps we should call them "teachers"—these grown people who stand ready to help in a Kindergarten, for, as was previously stated, "in a certain sense all those who touch the life of a little child are his teachers." Certainly these helpers are more consciously teachers than others; but, because in the past the term "teacher" has meant something different from our understanding of the grown people who assist in a Kindergarten, we shall call them "assistants" or "helpers," and continue to call the Kindergarten superintendent the "teacher."

Efficient Helpers Needed

It is not easy to be a helper in a Kindergarten. It takes a great deal of Christianity, because the ideal helper knows as much about child nature and needs and methods of work as does the superintendent-teacher, and yet, with all this knowledge, she must to a large extent stay in the background. There must, of necessity, be one leader—certainly only one at a time.

When a group numbers more than ten children an assistant is desirable. When it numbers fifteen children an assistant is really necessary. This is especially true of the vacation or weekday sessions of the church school, where there are apt to be more enterprises than in the limited time of the Sunday session. It is desirable that either the teacher or the assistant—preferably the latter—be a skilled musician. If neither is so skilled, there should be a pianist. A discussion of the work of the pianist will be taken up in Chapter X.

In a large department there may be, in addition to one or two helpers, a secretary-treasurer who may also act as hostess, meeting adult visitors and quietly welcoming them. She should keep all attendance and birthday records and an account of all money received and disbursed. She should do any writing that needs to be done, and send, at the request of the superintendent, all necessary letters for the department. She often needs to be cautioned not to let these mechanical duties interfere with her responsibility as a contributor to the general atmosphere of the department.

It does not seem wise to recommend a definite, stated proportion of assistants. Situations differ and needs differ. In some cases there should be a warning against too many assistants. It is easy to acquire so many that they are a hindrance rather than a help in the development of the children. In other cases, the work suffers for need of a sympathetic helper.

It is well to remember that not more than one person can lead at one time. Sometimes a helper spoils the atmosphere of the room and interferes with certain members of the group by making suggestions to individual children which are out of harmony with the plans of the teacher. For example, a teacher asked the question, "Of what song does this picture make you think?" as she showed a picture of a sleeping child. One of the helpers whispered audibly to the child next to her, "Say 'How Strong and Sweet My Father's Care.'" The child then gave the correct answer. The mistake was not that the helper whispered audibly, but that she whispered at all. The children should have been encouraged to think for themselves. In fact, if she had waited another moment, one of the children would doubtless have given the answer that was given, or one just as appropriate. Her act was a mistake from two standpoints: In the first place, she was giving training in deception. The teacher had not heard the prompting, which was heard by a visitor, and very naturally made the mistake of commending the child. In the second place, the song meant very little when given in this way, but would have been definitely connected with the thought of sleep if the child had made the connection herself.

When a Helper Is Not a Helper

Another mistake of the untrained helper is to give too much assistance to certain timid and unresponsive children. For example, in a vacation-school session a helper with the best intentions took the scissors and cut the make-believe flower for a little five-year-old who especially needed to be taught self-reliance. It was not wholesome for him to know that all the other children worked for their results, while no effort on his part was seemingly crowned with success. It is not easy for a

helper to sit back and keep "hands off," as it were, and patiently wait, as a wise teacher does, the gradual unfolding of a child's mind and heart.

"BUT," we hear some one say, "all that you have said is a bit negative. I sometimes find it easier to know what not to do than what to do. Please tell us what to do."

Routine Duties of Helpers

Of course there are a number of routine duties which need to be remembered. Some of these duties may be:

1. *Arriving several minutes ahead of time.*

This is especially needful for pianist and secretary. It is so important to have each helper in her place before any of the children arrive that perhaps we should not have said "especially the pianist and secretary." We can more accurately visualize the "upsetment" that will often result when pianist and secretary are absent than the failure that as often results when other helpers are not in their places. The late helper does not always know that she has caused a last-minute change in plans —oftentimes a change that has caused the children to suffer.

2. *Preparing for use the materials for creative work where they are needed.*

This service is especially needed in the vacation and weekday sessions of the department as, in these sessions, there is more time to handle such materials as clay, scissors, paste, and so forth. By "preparing for use" we mean, for example, the mixing of clay flour and water ahead of time; seeing that scissors, paper, crayons, and so forth, are in their places in the cabinet ready for use; mixing tempera paints when needed.

These examples are not given with the idea of suggesting that elaborate mediums of expression are needed for the creative work of little children. Often the simplest medium is the best, but if that simple medium is not at hand when needed, much valuable time is wasted. A teacher should feel free to say, "Miss Dorothy, may we have some paper and crayons? We'd like to draw pictures of the very prettiest things the heavenly Father has made," knowing that her helper can go quickly to the cabinet and supply the need.

3. *Assuming responsibility for the orderliness of the room, arrangement of flowers, and so forth.*

4. *Assuming responsibility for the ventilation of the room.*

5. *Seeing that the children put their hats and coats in the proper place on arriving and that they are properly "hatted and coated" on leaving.*

This does not mean that the helper should "put on" the coats and hats. The children should be allowed to do all they can do for themselves. This is a part of their training in self-reliance.

6. *Watching free play or other activities and reporting to leaders.*

Perhaps instead of saying "watching" free play we should say "participating in" free play, for this is the well-trained assistant's opportunity to be most helpful. Without dominating she may quietly join a group at play or a group at a loss as to what to play and tactfully lead them into worth-while activity. She may help the children to procure certain play materials that suggest an activity. She may play with them, helping to connect the play with familiar teaching content—as with a story, a song, or conversation which relates to the play. In

other words, a skillful assistant will help to make free play happy and meaningful. She will enter with the children enthusiastically into building an oriental house or a church of blocks, providing a bed for "Dolly," looking at picture books, and so forth. She will carefully treasure responses from the children and share them later with her fellow teachers.

7. *Ordering and caring for supplies.*

These duties are the special tasks of the secretary-treasurer. As a rule, the general secretary-treasurer of the church school sends to denominational headquarters for all teaching literature. It is the duty of the secretary-treasurer of the Kindergarten to estimate the number of teachers' helps and pupils' folders, and other needed materials, in order that such a list may be included in the general order. When the supplies arrive, they should have a definite place on the upper shelves of the cabinet—a place where they may be located easily.

The Kindergarten secretary-treasurer should also order and care for work and play materials. For example, if the crayons are beginning to be "used up," or if the supply of paste is about exhausted, it is her business to note these needs and supply them. A careful and co-operative secretary-treasurer is a joy to any superintendent and can help to lighten her task.

8. *Visiting in the homes of the pupils.*

While the contacts made by assistants with the home life of the children will not take the place of the contacts made by the superintendent-teacher, it is highly desirable that the helpers also shall know the children intimately. Many times a helper brings to the superintendent and her coworkers a home experience which she has been privileged to share. Such visits make her a

valuable connecting link between the home and the church school.

PERHAPS even more important than the routine duties are the self-imposed duties—those duties which must be discovered by the individual. As a rule, the necessity for quick judgment leaves no time for any one to give directions. Lucy begins crying just as the superintendent-teacher begins to tell a story. Will Lucy stop crying in time to keep from spoiling the story, or should the helper quietly persuade her to go outside the room where she will not disturb the whole group? This, you see, is a question of good judgment. A keen, wide-awake helper will recognize this as one of her special duties and will glance at the teacher for a look of guidance.

Self-Imposed Duties of Helpers

Margaret is timid. The teacher has encouraged all the group to go with her to examine some pictures in the corner of the room. Margaret, alone, keeps her seat. Shall the helper say something to Margaret which may encourage her to join the others, or is it better to let her sit quietly alone? This is a question for good judgment. It is necessary to know Margaret well before deciding. If she resembles a little boy of our acquaintance, the helper may almost say nothing, but go to her and put out her hand, and Margaret will cheerfully accompany her. The little boy of our acquaintance was Sam, who for a long time always had to be invited personally to participate in each activity. It seemed wise to take his hand and say, "Sam, should you like to go, too?"

Numerous incidents might be told to show the necessity for good judgment on the part of helpers. You can see that a helper needs a thorough background of preparation for performing self-imposed duties. May

we emphasize again the fact that it is not easy to be a helper?

A Helper-Teacher

"I CAN SEE, of course," says a thoughtful assistant, "that all these things about which we have been talking are very important, but I have a longing really to teach some day. Is there not some way in which your unified, informal program will allow me occasionally to tell a story to the children or to introduce them to a song? My superintendent may be absent, at times, and I should not like to have the whole responsibility thrust upon me at once. Can you suggest some way for me to practice on the children without hurting them?"

There is a place, even in an informal type of teaching, which gives to a helper just the opportunity which this questioner craves, but the informality of the procedure will have to be safeguarded by the superintendent-teacher. Perhaps, some day when the songs and the play and the conversation have led up to it, she will say, "If you will come back to your chairs [or to the rug], Miss Dorothy will tell you a lovely story." (Miss Dorothy has been told at least a week in advance that she would be asked to tell this particular story, although it seems a casual proceeding to the children.)

Even though it is not easy to tell a story, it is easier by comparison than to lead in other activities which might be chosen. It is easier than teaching a song, or initiating dramatic play, or leading in conversation. There is only one feature which may be easier to handle, and that is the outdoor games in the vacation session or the weekday session.

Perhaps on another day the superintendent-teacher will, through conversation, lead up to the place where she may say informally, "Miss Dorothy knows a song about

some helping people. Will you sing it for us, Miss Dorothy?"

If the creative work is something that needs the type of directing that a helper can give (for example, in manual work), this part of the morning's activity may be put into the helper's hands. This, however, is never the work for a novice. It needs most careful handling. A skilled helper can be especially valuable in this type of activity in a vacation church school.

These examples are given to show how a helper may learn to be an efficient leader without the superintendent's having to resort to a mechanical, set program containing disjointed sections. Gradually will come the time when every now and again the helper will take complete charge of the children and will lead them in all of their activities.

Who Should Be Helpers?

SOMETIMES the question is asked, "Do young girls or older women make the best helpers?"

The matter of age is not the first requisite, but it is certainly possible to make the mistake of choosing helpers who are too young. When we stipulate that the ideal helper should know as much about a child's nature and needs as the superintendent-teacher, it will readily be seen that a young girl of fourteen or fifteen cannot qualify. There are exceptions, of course, but as a rule a young woman should be at least eighteen years of age before she is chosen for this important position. A young mother is often a splendid helper. Of course it is not easy for a mother of little children to accept this responsibility, but it sometimes happens that a mother of Nursery children or Kindergarten children is available. There is often some person in the church—well qualified, but overlooked—who will render this service.

Perhaps this person is not a mother. It is often the case that one may find time to "mother" the children of the church when not responsible for her own little home circle. (This means, of course, wise "mothering" that is not a foolish coddling.) The all-important consideration is that this person be one who loves God and understands little children.

THE PREVIOUS discussion has led us naturally to the thought of "supervision," and, in fact, has illustrated one phase of it.

Supervision By supervision we mean the oversight which develops the use of the best possible learning methods with the children. We have endeavored, briefly, to show how a Kindergarten superintendent, with the best interests of the children at heart, feels it her duty to train her helper or helpers as a preparation for definite teaching. Shall we go more fully into her supervisory responsibilities?

We shall take it for granted that she will clearly inform her helpers as to their routine duties. This is the easiest branch of her supervision, because it is definite. And yet, even here, many a superintendent continues to do routine duties which a helper would gladly assume if the suggestion were made to her.

It is not easy to supervise the "Self-Imposed Duties" of helpers, but by commending something that is thoughtful and tactful there gradually comes a sense of discernment on the part of the helper as to what is good, what is better, and what is best. A most wholesome atmosphere is one of frankness, where the leader feels free to note, in a spirit of helpfulness, the mistakes which are made. She will use tact and never will she nag. She will many times find it wise to ignore minor mistakes and even major mistakes, temporarily.

In the following we are taking the suggestions and implied suggestions which have been brought to light in our discussion and putting them into a concise form as a help to superintendents in supervising helpers.

1. When you find that an assistant is retarding the development of a child by doing too much for him, talk to her frankly.

2. If a helper repeatedly neglects a routine duty, call it to her attention.

3. Sometimes allow a helper to visit other schools, giving her definite items on which she will report on her return.

4. Show appreciation of special evidences of good judgment on the part of a helper by a tactful word of praise, sometimes given in the presence of other helpers.

5. Tactfully give constructive criticism when a helper has been assigned responsibility for leading the children in any part of the activity.

One of the supervisory duties of the Kindergarten leader is to discover, as well as to train, assistants. She should constantly be on the lookout for young women who are potential leaders of little children. If we do not mistake the signs of the times, there will be in the near future a greater need than ever before for skilled, consecrated leaders in this most important branch of the work of the church. As we have said, these potential teachers of little children may be found in places in the church that have been overlooked. Thoughtful college or normal-school graduates, either married or unmarried, are apt pupils for training, if they love little children and love the Friend of little children. Invite them to join a training class and then, when there is an opening, take them into the department as assistants. Do not make the mistake of feeling that a good Leadership Training course is all that is needed. Training should be an ongoing process. The superintendent who realizes this will provide her assistants, as well as herself, with the

best magazines and books in the field of religious education. She will not be content merely to place a magazine or book in the hands of her assistants. She will have read the book or magazine herself and will call attention to a chapter or article which she particularly likes. One of the best supervisors that I know has done much to build up the efficency of her assistants through timely recommendations for professional reading.

It will be much easier for the superintendent-teacher to supervise others and help to correct their mistakes if she invites her helpers and other competent judges to criticize her mistakes. It is so easy for a leader to read into the responses of the children a viewpoint that was never intended. Her helpers can see a side of the situation to which the teacher is blinded. She wants so much to think that she is helping to develop a certain attitude in the children that oftentimes the facts in the case do not stand out clearly in her mind.

This atmosphere of give and take in criticism should help to develop in both teacher and helpers the power of self-criticism, which is of untold value. It should help to make the department "our department," instead of "my department," as is the frequent designation of a superintendent. If this frank discussion of plans is to mean the most, there must be frequent opportunities for conferences between teacher and helper. Often these conferences will just "happen," but there should also be stated times when the two or three or more workers will come to the church or to one of the homes for study and conference.

It is a joy to associate with a group of workers in a Kindergarten where there is a genuine spirit of comradeship in the group—where those who are banded together in a common purpose have play times as well as work times together.

In many schools there are directors of religious education and other persons competent to supervise a Kindergarten. Occasionally there is a supervisor for the Children's Division. In many cases there is a competent adviser available in the community who will be glad to counsel with those who are teaching little children in the church school. When there is no one in the church or community, help in supervision may be obtained through correspondence with denominational headquarters. Leaders in this department should covet the advice and kindly criticism of persons competent to advise, and should help to build up a relationship that is one of personal and professional friendliness.

Co-operation with Other Departments

WE INTIMATED in our discussion of the duties of the Kindergarten teacher that no Kindergarten should be a law unto itself. May we emphasize this? The Department should make its plans and govern its procedure with the knowledge that it is a part of a larger organization known as the "church school," and with a keen realization that it is a part of the division of the church school known as the "Children's Division."

There will be many times when it will behoove us to remember that "None of us liveth to himself." We may be in a poorly equipped church where the singing of the little children at certain times conflicts with the activities of other groups, and we shall have to arrange our procedure thoughtfully. There may be chances to coordinate certain activities with those of other groups. For example, there may be happy times when the Kindergarten children will be invited to come into the Nursery or Primary room for a brief time to share a song or a loved treasure. Perhaps the children have found a chrysalis, or an unusual flower, or a bird's nest. Per-

haps they have a new picture which they very much desire to share. At such times it will be co-operative to let them take their treasure to their friends, that they may enjoy it together. When once the value of interchange or sharing with other groups is realized, opportunities will be made or seized.

One means, and an important one, of co-ordinating the work of all the departments is through a general workers' conference where all plans and procedures are inaugurated in the light of the knowledge of what other departments are doing. The workers in a Kindergarten should take their places in such a conference—make their contribution, gain the inspiration that comes from an appreciation of the work of others, and experience the joy of co-operation.

Professional Training

OCCASIONALLY you hear the remark, "She is just a natural teacher." Perhaps the one under discussion has had no special professional training—courses in schools of religious education, Standard Leadership Training Schools, or through reading or correspondence. This teacher has, through the experience of living with little children, learned some of the things which she could have learned more quickly if she had availed herself of the experience of other people as well. Therefore, it seems rather shortsighted for any of us to choose deliberately to learn by our own experience only. Careful investigation generally shows that the type of teacher under discussion makes a great many mistakes. While some of her methods are good, she is not uniformly a good teacher. She may happen to use the right method today, but, not knowing just why it was a right method, she may fail at her next attempt even in a similar situation. A teacher who is limited to her own experience

largely uses the "trial and success or error" method, which at best is very slow.

Opportunities for study and training are always available to earnest students. There are current religious education magazines, as well as helpful books written out of the rich experiences of teachers of children.

One of the most worth-while opportunities for training is the Leadership Training class or school, made available by all of the denominations. In addition to the strictly denominational schools, there are interdenominational schools planned to meet the various situations in which teachers find themselves.

By far the most valuable means of training for leadership is the "Laboratory School," in which students are given opportunities for practice teaching under supervision. The usual procedure in such schools is to give at least an hour each day to the study of a specialization unit, to plan for at least an hour's contact with Kindergarten children, and to utilize another hour in a discussion of the responses of the children, the successes and failures of the methods used, and a detailed arrangement for the next day's work.

For students who cannot do class work there are correspondence courses, so there is no excuse for a teacher to neglect the privilege of sharing the teaching experience of others. Those who are now teaching in the church school, and others who are hoping to teach, should communicate with their denominational headquarters for information as to schools, classes, and the possibility of correspondence courses.

"The normal requirement of training for a teacher is the completion of the twelve units of the Standard Leadership Training Curriculum or the equivalent thereof, each unit requiring the successful completion of a course involving ten or twelve class periods of fifty

minutes each and a corresponding amount of time spent in preparation."[1]

THE SUPERINTENDENT and helpers alike need to cultivate the power of judging their own work. In many schools there is no specialist to supervise the work of the superintendent, and so, in addition to encouraging the criticism of her helpers, it is essential that she learn to evaluate her own personality and methods. If she learns to do this, her future development is assured.

Self-Rating

The following are a few suggestive questions which may prove helpful in self-rating. All apply to the superintendent, and many to both the superintendent and helpers. This list is not complete. Students should complete the list, making a worth-while chart by which they may check themselves from time to time:

1. Am I growing or developing in my Christian life?
2. Do children of their own accord seek me out as a companion?
3. Am I prepared by my background of experience to answer the questions of my children wisely?
4. Do I know and enter into the real experiences of my children?
5. Do I understand how to help to develop the experiences of children religiously?
6. Do the children feel free to initiate activities? If not, what is wrong with my method of leading them?
7. Does my real character show in my voice and manner?
8. Should I want my friends to judge my refinement by the appearance of the room in which I teach?
9. Do I often bring myself into contact with the beautiful in nature and art?
10. Can I honestly call myself open-minded? Prove it.

[1]International Standard for the Beginners' Department.

11. Do I take suggestions from others readily and often act favorably upon them?

12. Do I co-operate with the pastor, general superintendent, and teachers of other departments (as well as my own) and the other members of the educational staff of my church?

13. Am I interested in searching magazines and books for new developments in teaching?

14. Do I seize all available opportunities for training?

15. Do I visit other groups (church-school and day-school Kindergartens) to observe their teaching procedure?

For Assignment and Discussion

(*Choose one or more.*)

1. Discuss the following:
   "Adult Visitors."
   "Tardy Assistants."
   "Tardy Children."
   "Leadership Training in Our Department."

2. If you are a Kindergarten teacher, list the possible activities in which a group of children may engage for an hour in developing a spirit of helpfulness. Note those activities which may be led by an assistant without destroying the informality and unity of the session.

3. Work out a comprehensive plan of supervision in your church whereby the teaching in your Kindergarten will be improved.

4. Suppose that you are a teacher of four and five-year-old children, trying to teach in a situation where there is no separate room for the Kindergarten group. Outline a talk which you might make to the responsible officers of your church in which you will give reasons for the need of providing a Kindergarten room.

Helpful Books

PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Chapter XII, *Mossman.*

THE PROGRESSIVE PRIMARY TEACHER, Chapter IV, "The Teacher's Personality," *Stormzand and McKee.*

CURRICULUM-MAKING IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Chapter IV, *Lincoln School Staff.*

THE CHILD-CENTERED SCHOOL, *Rugg and Shumaker.*

CHAPTER V

The Children's Room for Work and Worship

PERHAPS you are walking in the cool of the evening when the lengthening shadows have almost melted into twilight. The sun has set, and dimming shafts of golden light are breaking through clouds of violet and rose. Through the lacy branches of arching trees an evening star is peeping. The world seems very peaceful. God seems very near, and you remember that "the groves were God's first temples." It is easy for you to worship, for you are surrounded by an atmosphere of worship.

Atmosphere

It is Sunday morning. Quietly you walk through an open Gothic doorway. The mellow morning light is filtering through the arching windows. Bells are chiming in the steeple and soft strains of music are filling the church as you take your seat. God seems very near, and you remember that He said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." It is easy to worship, for you are surrounded by an atmosphere of worship.

Atmospheres really affect us, do they not?

Suppose you were a four or five-year-old child. There are certain atmospheres which make it easy for you to realize that you are close to the heavenly Father. There are certain church-school rooms in which you love to talk to Him. May we try to describe one such room?

A Room for Work and Worship

It is very satisfying—this room planned for the work and worship of little children. The moment one crosses the threshold, the character of the room is felt. It has a warmth and a sense of having been used by children.

The warmth comes perhaps from the walls, which are a soft, pale amber, giving somewhat the impression of the glow that comes in an autumn afternoon under yellowing maple trees. The ceiling, not too high, is a lighter tone of this same color.

The woodwork, including the picture rail, is a deep ivory; and the hardwood floor is light oak. The chairs are a soft green, glazed over light oak, with the grain of the wood clearly in evidence.

The rug on the floor is hard to describe. It is a mingling of the autumn colors—the golden brown, the russet, and the fading orange of leaves that have fallen—colors warm, but mellow and restful.

Old-fashioned curtain poles, painted deep ivory to match the woodwork, are at the low, wide windows. The curtains are a sunshiny shade of theatrical gauze, hung from large wooden rings that match the soft green glaze of the chairs and tables—hung so that they barely touch the fernery of growing plants which must be wheeled to the windows for sunshine.

The permanent pictures, hung low, just above the picture rail, are Plockhorst's "Christ Blessing Little Children," Murillo's "Madonna and Child," and Jessie Willcox Smith's "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." The soft tints of these pictures must have something to do with the warmth and character of the room. There are also one or two temporary pictures on the rail in the corner of the room, where a group of children have gathered.

Another gathering-place is the low, kindergarten piano near the front of the room where three or four children have taken their places to choose songs.

There is one object which seems to catch and hold the light of the room. It is a rich, amber vase of beautiful wild flowers placed on a low table.

Picture books and various treasures on the tables give to the room the final touch which makes it a childlike room, planned for the work and worship of little children.

A Room Where Worship Is Difficult

THERE are certain church-school rooms in which it is difficult for a little child to realize that he is close to his heavenly Father. May we try to describe one such room? The walls once were white, but are now soiled and dingy. The glass in the two windows needs washing. It is a pity they are not kept clean, for the room is in the basement, and at best is poorly lighted. There is a torn green window shade at one window, and the other shade is missing. The chairs are a mixture of half a dozen old red ones and about twenty of a brownish color, hard to describe, as the paint has peeled off in many places. The floor is bare, although there must, at one time, have been a rug, for there are signs of a painted border around the edge of the room. There are a few pictures, hung too high for the enjoyment of the children, and they are poorly chosen. There is a drabness about the whole atmosphere, accentuated by a number of last Sunday's lesson folders strewn carelessly on the table, and a torn music book on the top of an old organ in the corner.

One would not readily remember here to "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness," certainly a little child

would not feel the nearness of God or feel that this is a room planned for the work and worship of little children.

Building an Adequate Room

PERHAPS these word pictures have emphasized the importance of the type of church-school room in which little children are taught. It may be that most of us can only take our present rooms and make the most of them, but many churches are building new educational plants or remodeling, and it is for these churches that we are here suggesting certain details in building which may be of help to the building committee and architect.[1]

It should be remembered that a building, in most cases, stands for a generation, and oftentimes longer. The decision as to what this building shall be is a serious responsibility.

Size of the Room—

The room should be large enough for all activities, and yet not so large that it will lose its homelike atmosphere. The accepted proportion is from eighteen to twenty square feet for each child. A room planned for twenty children should contain at least three hundred and sixty square feet of floor space, preferably four hundred.

In planning for more than twenty children there should be two Kindergarten rooms instead of one. In very large churches there may be a necessity for a number of departmental rooms. For example, if there are as many as sixty children they should be treated practically as three departments; and three rooms, each containing

[1]The superintendents of departments should have ample opportunity to present their needs to the building committee and to the architect.

about three hundred and sixty square feet of floor space, should be provided.

The shape of the room is largely a matter of taste, but a room that is longer than it is wide lends itself to the activities of children better than a square room.

Openings—

Good architects, of course, take into account the question of the proper lighting and ventilation of a room, but many forget or have never thought that the windows in a room to be used by little children should be low enough for the use of the children in case the outlook is at all desirable.[2] Clear glass is preferable to stained glass, unless the outlook is very undesirable. In this case a pale amber may be used. A safe estimate of the proportion of light needed is that the window space shall be at least 25 per cent of the floor space.

The position of the door may seem a trivial item, but the entrance of late comers or visitors may be disturbing if the door is in the wrong place It should be in the back of the room where it will least interfere with the activities of the children.

Built-In Cabinet—

As it is certain that a cabinet will be needed, it is well to have it built in when the room is being constructed. This cabinet should be in the back of the room so that it may not prove a distraction. In addition to adequate space for various teaching materials to be handled by the teacher, it should contain low shelves for the use of the children.

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[2]Architects naturally object to putting low windows in one or two rooms only. For this reason a request for low windows should be made before plans are drawn, so that the whole plan may be made with them in mind.

Suggested Contents of a Cabinet for Use in Sunday, Weekday, and Vacation Schools

On Upper Shelves. (*Material to be handled first by teacher.*)—

A Bible.
Lesson folders.
Pictures and mounting materials, such as:
- Upson board.
- Cardboard.
- Construction paper.
- Paste.
- Brushes.
- Shellac.

Manilla paper (12 x 18 inches).
Construction paper (assorted colors, 12 x 18 inches).
Oil paints.
Tissue paper napkins.
Thumb tacks.
Pins.
Nature materials, such as old bird's nests, etc.

On Lower Shelves. (*Materials to be handled and cared for directly by the children in work and play.*)—

Picture books.
Pictures.
Manilla paper (cut in various sizes).
Construction paper (assorted colors, 9 x 12).
Thin cutting paper (assorted colors, 9 x 12)
Cardboard.
Tempera paints.
Paint brushes.
Two dolls.
Doll dishes.
A small tea table.
Doll bed or cradle.
Toy animals.
Small broom.
Dust pan.
Scraps of cloth.
Blocks.
Rubber ball.

Plasticine.
Clay.
Scissors.
Paste.
Large marking crayons. (True tone crayons are desirable.)
Yarn.
Twine.
Paper brads.
Treasures brought by children.
Gifts made or accumulated for special occasions.

A File for Mounted Pictures—

In the suggested list above there was no definite provision for filing mounted pictures. Many teachers find that a large, deep box or bin is more satisfactory than open shelves, and may be planned carefully with reference to the size of the largest pictures used. Such a file makes it possible to locate pictures more quickly than on a shelf, and it also obviates the necessity for building the cabinet shelves unusually wide, as must be the case where one of their purposes is to serve as a file for very large pictures.

Picture Rail—

Some provision for temporary pictures should be included in the plans for the room. Many schools are using a picture rail. This rail is similar to a plate rail. It should be grooved, and should extend six or eight inches from the wall. If placed about twenty-six inches from the floor, it will be easy to place mounted pictures within the vision of a little child. This does away with the necessity for beaver board, cork, or burlap backgrounds, and eliminates the ever-evasive thumb tack.

Coat Room—

There should be a coat room adjoining the Kindergarten room. The hooks for coats and hats should be low enough for little children to reach. About forty

inches from the floor is a good height. Some coat rooms include a low shelf for hats, above the hooks.

Toilet—

A special toilet should be conveniently arranged and placed. It may be entered from the department room or from the coat room or from an entry way convenient to both.

Special Features—

Some very homelike Kindergartens have fireplaces. Even at times when it is not used there is something about a fireplace that makes for coziness and intimacy.

If a bay window fits into the architectural scheme, it makes a break in the usual rectangular or square room that is many times restful.

Low seats convenient to the windows are desirable in certain rooms. If these are made with hinged tops, they will serve as valuable space for storing toys and certain work materials.

If a book shelf is not included in the cabinet, a case or shelf for the leader's library may be built into the walls so that it may be closed flush with the wall.

A low shelf for the children's books may be a part of this small bookcase.

Color Combinations

IN CHOOSING the color scheme of any room there are a few principles which should be kept in mind. It will be well to remember the following:

1. The ceiling should be lighter in color than the walls.
2. The floor should be darker than either the walls or the ceiling.

3. Certain colors have more character than others. For example, pale blue and pale pink have less character than brown, yellow, or green.

4. Some colors are better for dark rocms and others for rooms that are well lighted. Warm tones of yellow are best for a very dark room, while olive, brown, old rose, or blue-green will tone down a room that tends to be too bright.

5. A note of vivid color should be obtained in a vase or a picture or flowers, rather than in the permanent decorations.

In addition to the room pictured in this chapter, the following combinations of colors are given for consideration:

1. Glazed brown over old ivory woodwork, sunshiny walls, and walnut furniture.

2. Deep ivory woodwork, cream walls, and gray-green furniture.

3. Glazed green over gray woodwork, ivory walls, and deep ivory furniture.

Furnishings

IN CHOOSING the furnishings for a Kindergarten room, the thought of durability should be taken into account, as well as the pleasing appearance of the furnishings. Sometimes it is more economical to buy the best in the beginning, rather than to face the necessity of renewal at frequent intervals.

Chairs for the Children—

Strong, durable chairs are greatly to be desired, and comfortable chairs are essential.

There are several chairs on the market that are good. Mosher or Posture League or good adaptations of these styles are desirable. They have backs that are not too low and that fit into the backs of little children. The seats are made to fit the form of the child. They should

be just high enough for the feet of the children to touch the floor comfortably. As a rule, ten-inch chairs will be found to be the best height. Some specialists recommend the purchase of two sizes so that the larger children, as well as the smaller, may be fitted exactly. Personally, I have found that in our informal teaching we change our positions so often that it is difficult to keep "adjusted." Then, too, we find that quite often a small child will want to be thought large and will choose the chair that is too tall rather than class himself with smaller children.

Chairs for Visitors—

There should be a few chairs for occasional visitors, placed at the back of the room, where they will not interfere with the spontaneity and naturalness of the children.

Tables for the Children—

Low tables are desirable. They are useful as a temporary repository for the treasures, picture books, and so forth, of the children. They are also valuable assets in creative manual work. But, in small-room situations, where a choice must be made between tables and adequate space for play and other activities, we feel that the space for activity must come first. If the tables must be eliminated, the children can work happily on the floor, kneeling or sitting in front of their chairs—using the chairs as tables.

For the school that does not have to consider expense there is available a gate-leg table that is ornamental, roomy (when the leaves are open), and yet inconspicuously small (when closed). The top when closed may be eight by thirty inches. The drop leaves may be eighteen inches by thirty inches. If the table is twenty

inches high, the drop leaves escape the floor when not in use. These little tables may be placed inconspicuously in various places against the walls, and really take up very little space until opened.

There are other tables which are less expensive and very practical. They are eighteen inches by forty-eight inches and may be used in various ways. They may be used singly, when planned for the use of one or two children. Two tables may be placed together when needed by a group of five or six children, and in a vacation-school session where a lunch table may be needed, a number of these tables may be joined together to make one large table.

Table for the Leader—

There should be a small, low table or stand for the use of the leader. Sometimes only a vase of flowers adorns it. Sometimes it holds teaching materials. A thoughtful teacher expresses a preference for a small, open-shelf book case with three or four shelves about 10 x 18 inches. On the top shelf she places flowers. The other shelves hold her Bible and materials used in teaching, such as pictures, folders, and possibly the work materials to be used informally during the session. She says that the shelves take less floor space and provide more space for "things."

Secretary's Desk—

The secretary's desk should fit into the general color scheme, but any appropriate style may be chosen. Space is needed for stationery and for filing records and reports. A small, flat-top desk is very appropriate.

A Piano—

A piano kept in tune is a help if handled by the right pianist. Do not use an organ as a substitute. In our

opinion more worth-while work may be done with no instrument than with a poor one or with a pianist who does not work in perfect harmony with the experiences of the children. A small, kindergarten piano is preferable. It is in keeping with the childlike furnishings of the room. There is an advantage also in the fact that the low top makes it possible for the pianist to see the leader and children as she plays the instrument.

Accessories—

There are certain furnishings, which, from a utilitarian standpoint, may not seem necessary, but which are a real contribution to the teaching values of a room. They are part of the atmosphere. Perhaps in the description of the room for work and worship previously given in this chapter, these silent contributors to atmosphere had a more potent effect on the observer than furnishings which are usually termed "strictly necessary." Among the accessories of a room we think of pictures, rugs, draperies, stands or receptacles for growing plants, and vases. We also think of the treasures that teachers and children bring to share with each other.

A room without pictures is bare indeed. We shall not discuss here ways of using pictures as teaching materials, nor give a list of desirable pictures to be used in helping to develop the various experiences of our children. These problems are left to the companion book which is being written. Our discussion here is of the selection and hanging of the permanent pictures which should have a place in a kindergarten.

There should not be a great many permanent pictures. It is better to have a few that are well chosen. And certainly a few good ones are better than a number of poor ones. Pictures are teachers, and should therefore be chosen with care.

The following is a list of suggested pictures from which three or four or less may be chosen, according to the size of the room:

CHRIST BLESSING LITTLE CHILDREN, *Plockhorst.*
THE INFANT SAMUEL, *Reynolds.*
TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE STAR, *Jessie Willcox Smith.*
MADONNA OF THE CHAIR, *Raphael.*
SISTINE MADONNA, *Raphael.*
THE SPRING SONG, *Glucklich.*
WE GIVE THEE THANKS, *Jessie Willcox Smith.*

In hanging a picture we should remember that it is being hung for the children and not for adults, and so should be low enough for them to enjoy. The size of the picture has something to do with its placement, but ordinarily it may be hung just above the rail (discussed previously under section "Building an Adequate Room")—just enough above to give the idea of permanency.

A rug makes a happy gathering place for children. It adds also to the attractiveness of a Kindergarten room, if the color scheme is carefully chosen. It is not possible in a general book to suggest the kind of rug that will be suitable for all of the different types of schools. Sometimes a visitor will be attracted to a rug or other furnishing because of the fact that it harmonizes with the surroundings in which it is placed, forgetting that it may not be at all suitable in her situation. For example, a student in a summer training school said, "I suppose this is the kind of rug we should use" (speaking of rag rugs, chosen to fit into a rural, camp situation), but her instructor soon made it clear to her that the rug was in keeping with the building, as were the burlap draperies, while either would be entirely unsuitable for use in most city churches.

Curtains or draperies give a softening effect to any room; a growing plant helps to feed the souls of little children; a colorful vase lends warmth to a neutral background. These with the treasures brought from time to time by the children and leaders make the room a desirable place in which to live.

Renovating the Room Where Worship Is Difficult

It is true that most of us cannot have new rooms built to order. Some of us cannot remodel our present rooms; but as long as there is not a vast amount of training needed in order to handle a paint brush, it is possible with a few cans of well-chosen paint to make our present room beautiful and harmonious.

I should like to blot out of my mind the word picture —all too true—of the basement room which was so unattractive that it repelled rather than drew little children to it. Shall we do this largely with a paint brush and carefully chosen paints?

It is a dark room, so we shall paint the soiled walls a shade which for want of a perfect name we shall call "sunshine" color. It is a tone of yellow that is not flat and glaring, but warm and soft. The woodwork we shall paint almost the same, for the room is small, and sharp contrasts would only serve to emphasize the smallness.

The chairs will be our next consideration. First, it will be necessary to give all of them a coat of priming. In fact the red chairs must have several coats before the old paint is effectively covered. Let us paint them a rich cream and use as a trimming a soft orange yellow that tones in with the walls.

When the floor is given a few coats of light oak, topped off with shellac, it rather invites the addition at

some time in the future of a harmonizing rug. Until such a time we can enjoy our room without it.

We shall take away the one window shade and hang unbleached cotton drapery, attached to cream-colored poles by orange yellow rings that match the trimmings of the chairs. We must adjust the draperies so that no light will be excluded from the carefully washed windows.

We shall place a picture rail on at least one or two sides of the room and hang good permanent pictures low enough for the enjoyment of the children.

The organ must be eliminated. Until we can get a piano we shall use its space for a low table around which groups of children can gather from time to time to look at picture books or draw with crayons or examine growing things.

Growing things are an important contribution to the atmosphere of our room, and so we shall place a vase of flowers on the table in front where all the children can see them.

There will not be much trouble in keeping the room tidy. A teacher and children will take pleasure in keeping their pretty room neat. Perhaps the Intermediate boys will build a simple cabinet for the supplies.

There will be no reason why little children should not find it easy to worship in this room.

Our Task

SOME of you are among the favored few who have voices in planning new church-school rooms for the activities of little children. This group has a big responsibility—the responsibility of putting ideals into brick and mortar.

The rest of us also have a responsibility—for giving to our children the best church-school environment within our power to give. Beauty can often be had without money. A teacher with an eye for beauty

can help to make a beautiful place for the work and worship of her children.

For Assignment and Discussion

(*Choose one or more.*)

1. The Kindergarten children in a certain church school have been meeting with the Primary children because there is only one piano for the use of both groups. Which is more important, the piano or the separate room? If the two groups should decide to separate, which should have the piano?

2. With the description of the basement room given in this chapter, plan a different way of renovating the room that would be equally or more attractive than the renovation suggested.

3. Draw a plan of your Kindergarten room, indicating exposure, openings, and placement of furniture. What changes can you make to render it more nearly a place for the work and worship of little children?

4. A friend teaching Kindergarten children in a rural section has been given the kitchen of the church as the only available room. Write a letter to her, making suggestions for equipping this room.

5. A friend who teaches a Kindergarten class has been given a living room in a home that is near the church. Write a letter to her making helpful suggestions as to equipping this room.

6. Suggest possible equipment for a corner in the main room of a small church.

Helpful Leaflets and Pamphlets

DENOMINATIONAL LEAFLETS AND PAMPHLETS.

CHAPTER VI

An Interchange of Ideas (*Conversation*)

SHUT YOUR eyes for a minute and quietly visualize the buzz of the various conversations that are going on in the world and their possible results.

The Value of Conversation

Just by way of stimulating our thinking we will record a few:

A busy housekeeper is talking over the fence with a neighbor; and the results of the conversation appear on two dinner tables later in the form of a new dessert. A business man, riding to town, puts down his morning paper as a neighbor takes the seat beside him on the Interurban; and he leaves the car in half an hour strengthened in his views on world peace because he has had a chance to "air" them and to listen to those of his friend. A number of bank directors are talking to each other with their feet under a common table; and the result is a plan for financing an important building project. A president's cabinet is weighing matters of state, each member contributing to the thinking of the group; and soon we learn that there is to be a cut in taxes. A bevy of débutantes are chatting; and through the chatter the Paris styles for the coming season are discovered. An ignorant man is engaged in conversation by a stranger; and in a few minutes he wends his way homeward discontented with his job and harboring Bolshevistic tendencies. A family is laughingly settling the question of whose turn it is to wash dishes; and a brand

of unselfishness is fostered. An artist and his friend are discussing the merits and shortcomings of his painting-in-the-making; and the result is a better painting. A radio expert is answering the questions fired at him by a dozen novices; and they leave him at least one degree less ignorant than before, and he leaves them knowing more thoroughly the things he has taught.

These records are a very, very small part of the "buzz" of human beings talking to each other. Some conversation is trivial, and it stupefies; some is invigorating, and it stimulates; some is poisonous, and it harms; some is health-giving, and it purifies.

We are not, however, chiefly concerned here with adult conversation. Little children, too, can learn through listening to and talking with others.

While the following statements regarding the value of conversation may be equally true in the home and elsewhere, we are confining our discussion largely to group conversations in the Kindergarten.

1. Each contributor has a sense of satisfaction and a certain amount of self-respect.

When a teacher listens courteously and is really interested as Ned announces, "Our cat has three new kittens," the little boy feels very comfortable. When she asks questions about the kittens and guides the whole group into a happy discussion which finally leads the children to talk intimately to the heavenly Father about their pets, Ned feels that he has made a real contribution, and so there is present a sense of satisfaction and a certain amount of wholesome self-respect. Little children are not vastly different from adults in their desire for self-expression.

2. Tactful conversation often helps to put a timid child at ease.

Was there ever a time when, in a group of strangers whose interests you did not know, you were conscious of being painfully silent? Perhaps in your need someone next to you called your attention to the lovely vase of flowers on the table and asked, "Do you know the name of those flowers?" You *did* know the name. In fact, it would have been hard indeed for anyone to name a flower with which you were not familiar. From that time on you were at your ease. You could talk more intelligently of flowers than of anything else, and so you answered questions and told of certain interesting experiences which you had had. You forgot yourself, and you no longer felt timid.

In the same way a timid little child often is made to feel at ease if he is tactfully encouraged to talk about the thing in which he is interested. "Is there a little baby at your house?" will often bring the light of love to a little child's face; and he will begin to tell you of the baby's new tooth and the "cute way he grabs the kitty's tail" and many other interesting things.

3. Conversation develops self-control and courtesy.

Children soon learn, or may soon learn, that all should not talk at once. It requires a decided degree of self-control for a little child to wait its turn and not interrupt when others are speaking. Through guidance in conversation a child may gradually develop this self-control and courtesy which, after all, is a much-desired species of unselfishness, not always attained by adults.

4. Conversation increases the vocabulary.

We begin to learn new words by hearing someone else use them or by reading, but we do not make them our own until we have used them ourselves. Through con-

versation a little child becomes acquainted with new words, and soon they become a part of his everyday intercourse. It is not, however, the primary function of the church school to increase a child's vocabulary; and so, unless this increased vocabulary is a step in religious education, we should leave this bit of education for the home and day school.

Let us think of some of the significant words little children may learn through conversation in the church school. You will think of many. The following words and word combinations will serve as illustrations: Talking to God, share, good gifts, guests, minister, the friendly dark, the happy daytime, the heavenly Father's care.

5. Conversation helps a teacher to know the real interests, needs, and capacities of her children.

The teacher who engages in a monologue instead of conversation never knows the real interests, needs, and capacities of her children. Oh, that we might talk less and listen more! It is so much easier for an untrained teacher to "tell things" to a group than to lead her little children to ask questions or share knowledge. For this reason she falls into the habit of singing songs, telling stories, or saying verses, with a vague feeling, it is true, that at times the children are not particularly interested. In fact, they do not seem really to need the material she is using. She often has a distinct impression that she has overestimated the mental capacity of some members of her group; and at other times she feels that she has underestimated their capacity. This impression, however, is a bit vague. It is borne in on her by a blank expression on most of the faces, or by what in an older person would be called a "bored" expression, accompanied by restlessness.

Away with the monologue! Converse and you will find yourself teaching children instead of themes.

The following is an accurate account of an experience with a five-year-old child, through which her vague, unhappy idea of heaven changed to a conception that was real and happy. The change came about through conversation. She could not have been helped truly until the one who helped knew what she was thinking. Her thinking is so clearly revealed in her responses that no comment is needed.

Time: Sunday morning.

Place: Church-school Kindergarten.

Situation: Helen was crying and saying, "I don't want to go," because a helper had prematurely said to her, "Some day we shall all go to the Heavenly Home."

I was called into the situation at this unfortunate juncture, and Helen was a stranger to me.

Realizing that she was too timid for me to begin immediately to converse with her alone, I called the whole group and began asking them questions about the prettiest places they had ever seen. The responses were enthusiastic—among them a place where there were "little stepping stones and water falling and falling."

After each beautiful place was named I said, "That is lovely, but the Heavenly Home is more beautiful than that."

Next we talked of the "best times we have ever had." After each was related, the little contributor was assured that "we shall have even more fun in the Heavenly Home."

One little child said happily, "We have the best times of all in my home," and naturally this response was seized upon. "Of course, you do! I believe that homes are the best of all for good times. The Heavenly Home is a home, too, you know." Then the children had to be dismissed.

All the time I was keenly aware of Helen, but I was not assured that she was satisfied, even though she had gradually dried her eyes.

She sat in her chair, after the others had gone, waiting for an adult to take her home.

I slipped into the chair next to her, and, feeling that our friendship was now on a firmer basis, I ventured (for she knew

the helper had appealed to me) to say, "It's all right now, is it not, Helen?"

"Y-yes," came the doubtful reply, and I knew she was still troubled.

"I wish," I said, "that I could draw a picture of the Heavenly Home for you, but I can't. It is so beautiful that no one can."

"I can," was the unexpected reply, "I would take a blue crayola."

I realized immediately that heaven in her mind only meant blue sky. I felt helpless to give her a correct idea, but knew that her baby mind needed something familiar on which to rest. There was a real need here—tragically real—and it must be met on the plane of her capacity.

"Yes," I said, "that would help, but you would have to put a home in the picture. Could you do that?"

"Yes, I could," and the eyes were brighter.

"You would have to put people in the home. Of course Jesus would be there, and I know you would want Mother."

"Yes, and Daddy!" the really happy voice rang out.

Then, with real enthusiasm, she began to name the different members of her family. "But," was the startling information, "not *Joe!*" Joe was an older brother and it developed on further questioning that "he teases me."

After a bit of persuasion Joe was included in the Heavenly Home.

I was sorry for his previous exclusion, but he served to convince me that the reality of heaven had come to little Helen—that she was no longer frightened and sad at the thought that some day she would go to the Heavenly Home. And this change in her thinking came about through conversation.

6. Conversation presents an opportunity for giving information at an appropriate time.

How much better it is to tell the story "David Playing for the King" after conversation about happiness and doing things to make other people happy than to tell it as a mere story!

The story "God's Care of Jacob" has real significance when told after the children have been discussing the

nighttime. Perhaps they have been looking at pictures, and you have led them to talk about their own bedtime. You know that deep down in most little hearts there is a wee bit of fear of the dark. Therefore, at the most appropriate time, almost as a part of the conversation, you begin your story, in which the thought of God's care at night is surely evident.

Songs are much more appropriate as a part of conversation than when introduced merely as songs. The same is true of verses of Scripture, of manual work, of pictures, and of dramatizations.

We are forced to believe that information given when a learner is really ready for it is more likely to become a part of the on-going experience of the learner than when given under other circumstances. This is another statement of the "Law of Readiness."

7. Conversation gives an opportunity for correcting wrong impressions.

If space permitted, incident after incident could be cited to show that little children—even children under the guidance of thoughful parents and teachers—often receive wrong impressions. These impressions are most often revealed through conversation. The teacher will revise and retell a certain story, will make an explanation of certain words in a song, or will otherwise tactfully correct wrong conceptions on the part of certain little ones in her group.

8. Conversation, to some extent, is a means of evaluating past teaching.

Our discussion in the last paragraph bears on the question of the evaluation of past teaching, but only treats one side of the subject—and that the negative side. It is helpful to learn of mistakes that they may be

corrected, but it is equally helpful and more encouraging to learn of successes. Teaching is a joy when Franklin confides that he is not afraid of the dark any more; when John lets you know that he stopped while riding on his tricycle to say "Thank You" to God; when Lena says, "I just love Jesus. He is so kind."

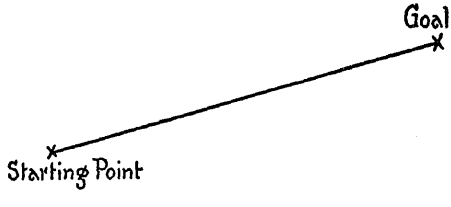
Conversation is not, it is true, an absolutely accurate means of evaluating past teaching, for children at times claim undeserved credit for virtues and imagine themselves better than they are, but certainly their conversation does help us to evaluate our teaching. We learn, it is true, of failure, but we learn also of certain impulses toward kindness and reverence and co-operation which spur us to greater efforts.

1. Have in mind a definite goal to be reached, or a purpose to be accomplished.

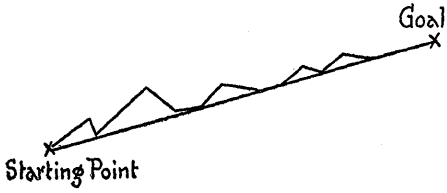
It is easy to be "side-tracked," as it were, and to talk about trivial things or to pursue in a purposeless manner subjects that might be significant if developed.

Conversational Rules

It is true that courtesy and good teaching recognize the fact that the best conversational procedure is not always a direct route from "Starting-point" to Goal, or objective, but is so



controlled that each departure is utilized, if possible, and made a contributing factor.



Suppose, for example, that your purpose is to help to give to little children an appreciation of the coming of the baby Jesus. You have planned, on this first Sunday, to tell to them the story of His birth and to sing with them this same story, but the best approach to this appreciation which will serve to make the story real may not be the most direct. Your story of the "Dearest Baby of all" will be very satisfying after the children have been allowed to talk about babies.

The following stenographic report of the response of one group is given, as it serves to illustrate, not only the point under discussion, but other points to be considered. It is recorded "mistakes and all." It does show that the teacher has a real purpose in mind. It shows also some of the chances presented for deviation.

I Learn of the Little Lord Jesus

Leader's Purpose: To help the children to be glad that the Lord Jesus came as a baby to live on the earth.

A Stenographic Report of the Procedure of One Group[1]

Marjorie: Miss S., I have a loose tooth and it hurts.

Miss S.: You have? I suppose the best way will be just to forget about it while we work and play.

[Takes the flowers that a child hands to her.] So many brought pretty flowers this morning. When I woke up this morning I found myself thinking about the flowers. I thought about this song and wanted to sing it [singing]:

[1]Reported while the vacation course *Beginners in God's World* was in progress. Used with permission of Bd. of Christian Education, Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.

"Oh, who can make a flower?"

I suppose it was because there are so many flowers in bloom and I could see some of them outside the window. [Looking around the circle.] Has D. G. gone?

Wilbur: Yes, he's gone.

Miss S.: I am sorry he has gone. We wanted to talk about the new baby at his house. We will talk about the baby at your house, too [to Wilbur and John].

Catherine: I've got that new car now.

Miss S.: Isn't that fine!

Catherine: Daddy can't drive so very well. When he gets so that he can drive it he will let Richard sit on his lap and drive.

Miss S.: Yes, it takes some time to learn to drive well. Is there a baby at your house, Catherine?

Catherine: Yes.

Miss S.: What is his name?

Catherine: His name is Robert Allen Buckingham.

(Miss S. asks several children about the babies at their homes.)

Lawrence: Mamma says we might get one.

Miss S.: Wouldn't that be fine? I haven't heard about all the babies yet. Alfred, what is your baby brother's name?

Alfred: Charles Kemper Lorraine.

Ben: Our baby's name is Betsy Boo.

Marjorie: She stole my little sister's name.

Miss S.: You don't mind having two little girls named Betsy.

Catherine: Our baby is beginning to walk and crawl around. He pulls things around the house and Mother can't keep the house clean. I have to help to do so much work.

Miss S.: You don't mind, do you? Little babies don't know any better.

Catherine: No, he doesn't know any better.

Miss S.: But we like to do things for them.

Catherine: My mother has to get me to help dress him. I don't want to, but I just have to.

Miss S.: But you love to do things for him, don't you?

Winifred: We have a baby.

Cynthia: Our little baby will just talk his head off if you ask him questions. My big sister, when she was a baby, was just teeny-weeny.

Miss S.: We were all babies once, were we not?

Winifred: I was born in a clothes basket.

Miss S.: A basket makes a nice soft bed.

Marjorie: Mr. Piephoff brought Betsy Boo [meaning Ben's little sister] up to the table and she put a flower in the vase.

Miss S.: She must be getting big to do that.

Anne: I have a baby [meaning a doll].

Miss S.: Let's put our babies to sleep now.

Marjorie: I don't have a baby to put to bed, but I have an infant [meaning a particular make of doll].

Miss S.: Where is your infant?

Marjorie: At home.

Miss S.: Now we will all put our little babies to sleep. Let's sing the song that I have been singing when you rested, about the baby birds in their nest.

Alfred: I have been playing with a bow and arrows this morning and I saw a bird in a nest.

Miss S.: Yes, the mother birds put their little baby birds to sleep, and now we will sing our babies to sleep. [They sing]:

"The little new birds are asleep in the nest,
For their mother has cuddled them under her breast;
The night stars they twinkle and blink in the sky,
And the night wind is singing a lullaby—
Oo-oo-oo, lullaby."[2]

(Rocking imaginary babies as they sing.)

Anne: I saw someone peeping through the crack [looking toward the door].

Miss S.: I hope no one will wake our babies up. Let's all put our babies to sleep. Anne, will you sing your baby to sleep?

(Anne and Miss S. sing the lullaby.)

Miss S.: You may all sing the wind's song. (They sing, "Oo-oo-oo, lullaby.")

Miss S.: Alston, let's put your baby to sleep. (He sings lullaby with her.)

Miss S.: Who should like to put her baby to sleep?

Cynthia: I should like to. (She and Miss S. sing, children singing with them on wind song at the end.)

Miss S.: Who else wants to put his baby to sleep? (Each child who wishes to do it separately is given a chance to do so. It is interesting to note that the boys respond just as readily as the girls.)

Lawrence: Miss S., we have another new little kitten.

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[2]*Worship and Conduct Songs,* copyright, 1927, by Elizabeth McE. Shields.

Miss S.: That is another little baby, isn't it? Suppose we put all our babies to sleep. You may find a quiet corner and stay with your baby until you are sure it is asleep. (Children go to corners of room and play putting babies to bed. Those who did not respond readily do so after a bit of individual encouragement, and all but two play doing it.)

When you think your baby is asleep you may tiptoe back to the rug and very softly find a place while I tell you a story about a baby—the very sweetest and dearest baby in the world! (The story "The Baby Jesus" is told.)

Miss S.: We have some pictures of the shepherds. (Showing "Angels and Shepherds," by Plockhorst.)

Cynthia: Oh, that is pretty!

Marjorie: That makes me feel like singing "The First Noel."

Miss S.: Does it? Should you like to sing it? [They try to sing it.] That is lovely.

Anne: I feel like singing [hesitates and cannot name song]—

Marjorie: I feel like singing "Glory to God in the Highest."

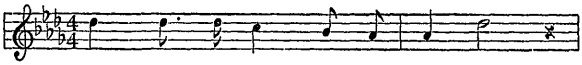
Anne: That's the one I feel like singing.

Miss S.: Will you sing it, Marjorie? Do you know a tune to it?

Marjorie: No, I don't.

Miss S.: Perhaps you could make a tune, then maybe I could play it on the piano. (Marjorie stands as if thinking for a few minutes.)

Marjorie: I have got one now. [Sings a simple little tune which she made up.]



Miss S.: Let me see if I can play it on the piano. [Goes to piano and plays.] Is that right? [Marjorie sings it again and Miss S. plays it as the child repeats it. She takes notes on paper.] That is a pretty tune. If you like, I will write it down so that we may sing it again sometime. Maybe we shall all want to sing it now [after writing it down].

(Children sing with her.)

Miss S.: Who else can sing Marjorie's tune? All right, Alfred.

(Alfred sings it.)

Marjorie: I want to tell you something. I've got a poem of the story you just told us.

Miss S.: Can you say it for us?

(Marjorie does not know it.)

Miss S.: Cynthia is passing the picture. Let's see what it makes you feel like singing. [Lerolle's "Nativity" is the picture.] This is a different picture, isn't it? This is a picture of the little Lord Jesus in the manger.

Anne: Don't tell. We want to *see* it.

Miss S.: I am so sorry I forgot and told. Forgive me, Anne. I am so sorry I told. (Each child is given an opportunity to see the picture and whisper the name of the song of which it makes him think.)

Marjorie: When the rest of them finish I will sing what it is.

Alfred: I think I know what it is she thinks.

Miss S.: Will you whisper it to me?

Alfred (*whispering*): "Away in a Manger."

Miss S.: Anne, you may come and tell me what you were thinking of. [Anne whispers, then Marjorie whispers, and so does Cynthia.] I wonder if anybody else thought of a song to sing. All four of us thought of the same one. Let's sing it. (Small group stands with her and they sing "Away in a Manger.")

Marjorie: I can sing the second verse.

Miss S.: Let's all sing the first stanza before you sing that one. (They sing together again.)

Cynthia: I know another tune.

Miss S.: Do you like our tune? I am so glad the heavenly Father sent the little Lord Jesus. I thought you should like to talk about the little Lord Jesus this morning.

Before we go out for play let's thank our heavenly Father. What should you like to thank Him for?

Cynthia: For little babies.

Anne: For the little Baby Jesus.

Miss S. (as children bow heads and repeat after her): Thank you, heavenly Father, for all little babies. Thank you for the little Lord Jesus. Amen.

NOTE.—Having endeavored, at so much pains, to remind ourselves of the necessity for having a purpose, we now frankly give warning that there are times when our original purpose should be tossed to the winds and new ones substituted as the result of conversation with the children.

2. Courteously ignore topics which in your judgment should not be developed.

All topics are not equally fruitful, nor are all topics of equal religious significance. It is a bit painful, at times, to witness the efforts of certain conscientious modern teachers who have had just enough training to find themselves endeavoring to turn into a religious channel every remark made by a child. The child who saw "a dead horse on the side of the road" need not be frowned upon, but the topic should be ignored as far as any group development is concerned. It sometimes happens that something which has made an unpleasant impression on a child should be told to someone as a relief. In this case the teacher might say "Go over in the corner and tell it to Mrs. . . . ." (one of the assistants).

Certain home happenings, the discussion of which would be embarrassing to the "grown-ups" concerned, should be ignored. Little children will often innocently divulge the most private concerns of their family, if allowed to do so. The teacher with refined instincts will sense this and tactfully guide the conversation into safer channels.

3. Do not cut off abruptly a child who desires to contribute.

It is true that each remark contributed by a child cannot and should not be developed, but there is a fineness of feeling—a sympathy—on the part of the true teacher that will accept these would-be contributions with a kindness and courtesy that warms the heart of a timid child and lets no child feel uncomfortable.

4. Do not encourage one child or a few children to do all of the talking.

It is easy to use John's contributions. He likes to talk, has a keen mind, and expresses himself in such a way

that the whole teaching process seems to move rapidly. We find ourselves developing John, but forgetting to develop quiet little Mildred who needs it more. It is a good plan, now and then, to check ourselves to see whether or not all the children in our group are being developed.

5. Word your questions clearly, one at a time, and avoid all ambiguous questions.

Do not say, "Can you think of a boy who helped and a girl who took care of her brother?"

The following are examples of questions which may lead children to think:

"Which child should you like to have been?" (Looking at Plockhorst's picture "Christ Blessing Little Children.")

"Can you tell me the name of this flower?" (Holding a flower for the children to touch and see.)

"What can a little child do to help Mother?" (Developing a child's part in making home a happy place.)

"How can a child help God to take care of His flowers?" (After an appreciation of growing things, as a first approach to working with God.)

6. Introduce easy and fruitful topics of conversation.

Four and five-year-old children spend most of their time in their homes. The topics which will be of most interest to them are those that have to do with the everyday home surroundings or happenings. Their toys and pets as well as playmates and other people who touch the home life are fruitful topics.

7. Wait patiently for responses, but do not let the conversation drag.

Socrates' method of teaching had its fine points, but was weak in one respect. The old philosopher proceeded

on the assumption that truth, or all desired information, was either consciously or unconsciously possessed by his pupils. Therefore, the business of the teacher was not to give information, but to ask questions which should draw information from the pupils.

The strength of this method lies in the fact that the pupil does his own thinking, spurred by the right kind of questions, but there is a vast amount of needed information which does not lie in the mind of the pupil and has to be given to him by the teacher. This is especially true in the case of little children. We often make the mistake of asking questions that require either too much thought, or needed information, before they can be answered.

It is not easy to give advice to an untrained teacher as to how long to wait for an answer to a question. In most cases there should be a short pause only. Some of us wait too long, not sensing the fact that we have made a mistake in assuming on the part of the children the interest, knowledge, and mental capacity needed for an answer. The result is a restlessness in the group which might have been avoided.

8. Whenever possible allow and encourage children to give information.

What we have just said does not contradict the practice of encouraging children to give as much information as possible. It is a fairly safe rule not to tell children something that they can find out for themselves, and it is often better to let a child share his information with the group than for the teacher to do so. There will be many times when it will be necessary for the teacher to share her knowledge and experience. She must sense these times, but wisely refrain from monopolizing.

IT DOES not seem necessary, after our previous discussion, to say a great deal about when to engage in conversation. I hope that we have made it clear that there is no set time; and yet it does seem necessary to emphasize this fact. There are still teachers who apparently say to themselves, "Go to now, we will have a bit of conversation," instead of letting it permeate their whole procedure. In other words, the "circle talk" of former days, as a set time for conversation, is now considered much too formal and limiting.

When to Engage in Conversation

Conversation may come before or after a new song, or an old one for that matter: it may come as the children look at a picture or examine a bird's nest: it may come as a preface to a prayer, or while the teacher turns the pages of the Bible to find a favorite verse: it may prepare for a story or vitalize dramatization: it may lend zest and meaning to manual work, or give purpose to games.

Group conversation is valuable, but sometimes the most profitable conversation takes place when a leader or an assistant is conversing with one child only, engaged in work or play activities. We must remember that conversation is for the development of little individuals rather than of ideas. The whole program—Sunday, weekday, and vacation-school—is for the children. Their opinions and questions are to be considered, and they should be given frequent opportunities for voicing questions and sharing experiences.

For Assignment and Discussion

(*Choose one or more.*)

1. Read carefully the stenographic report of conversation given in this chapter under "Conversational Rules," and note the times

when the responses of a child might have diverted the conversation into channels which had no bearing on the purpose which the leader had in mind.

Note any mistakes which the leader made, and show how her mistakes might have been avoided.

2. Visit a Kindergarten during a Sunday morning, weekday, or vacation session, and note, as accurately as you can, all the conversations that take place.

Helpful Books

KINDERGARTEN METHOD IN THE CHURCH SCHOOL, Chapters VII and VIII, *Baker.*

UNDERSTOOD BETSY, *Dorothy Canfield Fisher.*

CHAPTER VII

Helping Little Children to Pray

WHEN Jesus lived on the earth, his disciples, spiritually hungry, begged, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Praying versus "Saying Prayers"

Throughout the ages hungry hearts have felt the need of fuller communion with the heavenly Father, and have cried out, "Lord! teach us to pray."

When this prayer has been prayed sincerely by a teacher of little children, her next request should be "Lord, teach me how to teach little children to pray."

Even as she is striving to meet the conditions which will enrich her own prayer life—though she cannot say, "Do as I do"—if she is honestly hungering for a closer walk with God, she will find that, after all, she must take the little child's road to the heavenly Father. And so, she points the way for childish feet, and often finds that the little one whose hand is in hers is leading the way.

If we watch closely the little children whom we are leading and know truly the God to whom we want to lead them, we shall learn that they must be led along the paths of sincerity and joyousness; that they are sometimes thoughtful and quiet, sometimes thoughtless and rollicking. Yet always the word "childhood" should mean sincerity and joyousness.

When we say "teaching little children to pray," we do not mean "teaching little children to say prayers." We mean, leading little children into the very closest communion with our heavenly Father, teaching them to

speak to him often in their joys or sorrows, in their play-time or quiet rest times, at stated times or at any time.

The Elements of Prayer

It may help us in our thinking if we consider the elements of an adult's prayer with a view to finding out whether or not these same elements should find their place in a child's prayer.

Thoughtful people, in analyzing the prayers of adults, have recognized the presence of the following elements:

Adoration.
Thanksgiving.
Supplication.
Submission.
Confession.
Companionship.

At first glance these adult words seem cold and mechanical to apply to the almost lisping approach of a little child to his heavenly Father. Shall we examine them one by one?

Adoration—

Translated into a child's vocabulary, adoration means "I love you, God."

The wise teacher or parent will not demand the words before the desire to express them is aroused. The little child loves most those who do most for him—provided the service rendered is on his own plane of appreciation. For example, his mother is loved because she tells stories to him, or gives him his food, or plays with him, or stays close by when he is frightened. He seems to love his heavenly Father in the same way.

First of all comes the realization that God has made the beautiful things about him which give him pleasure.

The little baby asking his first questions, on seeing the moon, said, "What's that?"

"We call it 'the moon,'" was the answer.

"Who made it?" asked the child.

"God made the moon," was the mother's answer.

"Pretty moon, pretty God," came from the baby lips, as the little boy looked wonderingly up into the night sky.

And so his first communion with God held the element of adoration.

There are frequent opportunities in the church school for the expression of adoration. In the midst of activities which induce worship there are many times when children will gladly pause and say, either in words or in the expression of their faces, "I love you, God."

Thanksgiving—

Very soon the expression of a sincere love for God and appreciation of his gifts is possible. "Thank You, God," comes very naturally into children's hearts and finds expression on children's lips, if wise parents and teachers take the time to lead them to an understanding of God's part in providing for their needs.

It is rather important to show to them as much of God's method of doing this as they are capable of understanding. They may be allowed to stand in wonder before the sunset or the evening stars, before an opening flower or a tree, while you whisper, "Our heavenly Father made that." But, "The heavenly Father gave your nice breakfast to you," needs more explanation. Before this statement should come the story of the growing and care of food-producing plants—of God's gift of rain and sunshine, and of the work shared by those who sow the seed, care for the plants, and gather the crop. When the little child truly understands, his thanksgiving is very real—perhaps most real because his very egoism makes him feel that the gifts were made just for him.

Church-school teachers need to be careful in safeguarding the prayers of thanksgiving. It is so easy to say to the children, "What do you want to thank the heavenly Father for today?" and to receive practically the same answer each Sunday. Do not use this method so often that it will become fixed. Frequently use special reasons for thanksgiving.

Supplication—

Supplication is not, perhaps, one of the first elements of a child's prayer, although he learns very soon to say "God bless Mother," and "God bless Daddy," and "God bless me." Sometimes "and make me a good boy" is added. It is not easy to make these phrases really meaningful, but a beginning can be made.

The kind of supplication that is the most difficult to safeguard is the prayer for material things. The faith of a young man was weakened because when he was a child and prayed for material gifts his parents always managed, if possible, to see that the gifts came to him. Later on he came to realize what had been done and to realize that when he did not pray audibly his prayers for material gifts were not always answered in the affirmative. He lived for many years before realizing that a wise heavenly Father often says "No" instead of "Yes." It is much more wholesome for a little child to understand that God is saying "No" than to feel that his prayer is not answered.

Sometimes children get the idea that God is merely a sort of glorified Santa Claus. This was evidenced in a recent report by a relative of two very little children who decided one day that they would "play being God." The older one climbed to the top of the piano and threw toys to the younger, who stood with hands posed in a supplicating attitude. After a few minutes the little one took

her turn at "being God," and the positions were reversed.

This incident startles us, it is true, but it calls us to task for some of our past methods of teaching children to pray. The wise parent and teacher will put the emphasis on spiritual rather than on material gifts.

As will be seen in the following report, one of our church-school teachers most wisely helped to give a true and sane foundation for the prayers of supplication of a little boy.

On the Sunday following the story of "David, the Shepherd Boy," the teacher and the group were talking of how God helped David. This naturally led to the discussion of "God is my helper."

Y. W. said, "Miss Jean, will God help me to hop?"

Miss Jean replied, "I am sure he will, if you try."

Several days later the children older than Y. W. were playing "Hop Scotch" on the sidewalk in front of his house. Y. W. watched them hop and tried to hop but he could not. That night when he went to bed he prayed, "Dear God, help me to hop like Mary and John" (his older brother and sister).

Several days after this the children were playing again. Y. W. watched them. He tried and tried and finally caught on to the idea of hopping. On he hopped up and down, unconscious of anyone looking at him. His mother heard him at the top of his voice say, "Thank You, God. Thank You." Then he ran as fast as he could to the porch where his mother was seated, his face beaming with joy. "Mother, Miss Jean said He would help me if I tried, and He did," he exclaimed.[1]

Submission—

Submission on the part of a child is a willingness to do God's way because it is pleasing to the heavenly Father, and a willingness to accept the gifts provided, even though something else was desired.

This element rarely sincerely creeps into the prayers of children. It is an element, for that matter, that is often lacking in adult prayers. It can, however, have its beginning in children's prayers.

[1]Reported by a teacher.

I know of a five-year-old who accepted a rainy day at home instead of enjoying a picnic with the statement, "I 'spose God knew the flowers needed water."

Confession—

Confession of wrongdoing is an element which parents, rather than church-school teachers, should feel responsible for developing.

It is not wise to lead a child to confess publicly to God his personal shortcomings, but in the intimate bedtime hour the little one may be led to pray truly, "I'm sorry, God, that I didn't let Buntie ride on my scooter. Help me to remember to share my toys."

This, however, should come after conversation about the day's happenings, and should be very sincere and not a repetition only of the mother's words.

Companionship—

Communion with God means more than talking to him. There is a sense of companionship that does not adequately express itself in adoration or thanksgiving, that does not ask for anything. Even a child may feel this. Perhaps the easiest way to define this sense of companionship as felt by a child is to recall "An Extra Prayer."

"Sometimes I say an extra prayer,
  Besides the one for which I kneel.
I stand and look up at the stars,
  And tell our Father how I feel.
I do not ask for anything;
  I just feel happy thro' and thro':
I let my heart give thanks and sing,
  Till all the world seems good and true."

—*Annie Willis McCullough.*[2]

[2]From *Songs for Little People,* Danielson and Conant, Copyrighted. Used by permission Pilgrim Press, Publishers.

Methods differ and vocabularies differ, but sincere communion between God and his big and little children is much the same in its elements; and it may help us to remember this and hold to essentials as we begin our study of children's prayers.

THE question is often asked by parents and teachers, "Shall we teach our children forms of prayer?"

Forms of Prayer

A form prayer holds certain values, but certainly contains dangerous elements as well.

A form prayer is valuable for the following reasons:

1. It teaches a certain vocabulary of prayer.
2. It may express a child's own thoughts as he could never express them unaided.
3. It sometimes increases the range of thought of the one who prays, reacting on his own experience.
4. It helps to socialize the group, when entered into by several persons, and so broadens and enriches the experiences of each member of the group.

All of this sounds a bit technical when we realize that we are talking about a little child's approach to our heavenly Father. Will it not seem less so if we illustrate these values?

1. Just as a little child is taught, when forming his first sentences, to say, "Thank you, Mother," or "Thank you, Daddy," he may be taught to say, "Thank You, God." We should be very careful, however, to know that he is really thankful before encouraging him to say the words. Thus the words will be a sincere expression of real feeling.

2. Someone has said, "As soon as we read or hear our own thoughts better expressed than we could express them, we realize at once that they are our own thoughts

and that we are better and stronger for their adequate expression."[3]

Does not a little child, when he hears a simple, beautiful prayer, worded on the plane of his understanding, often feel, even though he may never say so in words, "That's just what I wanted to say to God"?

3. The little child's range of thought is increased by leading him to think of some of the definite objects of his thanksgiving. A form of prayer which helps to do this is:

"Thank You, Father, for the sky;
For the sun and rain and snow;
Thank You for the stars at night;
Thank You for the winds that blow.

"Thank You for the birds and trees;
For the flow'rs that bloom so fair;
Thank You for the food we eat;
Thank You for Your love and care."[4]

4. As prayers are earnestly prayed by a group of children, there is something in the group response and the appreciation of all the children which reacts on each child. This is what we mean by socializing the group and enriching the experience of each member.

A form prayer has a place in group worship, provided the emphasis is not put upon this kind of prayer, and provided the same form is not used too often.

Occasionally the children can have a responsive part in a form of prayer in which the leader enumerates the objects of thanksgiving, and the children join with her in the simple phrase, "Thank You, heavenly Father." The following is an example of this type:

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[3]Dr. Alphonso Smith in *What Literature Means to Me.*

[4]Myrtle Williamson, in *Worship and Conduct Songs.* Copyrighted, 1926, by Elizabeth McE. Shields.

For watching when I'm in my bed,
With stars all shining overhead,
Thank You, heavenly Father.

For caring when I'm at my play,
And when I'm working through the day,
Thank You, heavenly Father.

Song prayers are, of course, forms. They hold a very dear place in the hearts of children, and many children as they sing them are truly praying. This is apt to be the case when the songs have been taught as prayers and when they are always so used.

One example of this type of song is old but ever dear:

"Father, we thank Thee for the night
And for the pleasant morning light;
For rest and food and loving care,
And all that makes the day so fair.

"Help us to do the things we should,
To be to others kind and good;
In all we do in work and play
To grow more loving ev'ry day."
—*Rebecca J. Weston.*[5]

There are many songs which are not prayers but which help to bring little children into an atmosphere of prayer. The prayer in this case may not be voiced, or it may take real form on the child's lips.

A group of kindergarten children were taught the song which begins:

I wake in the morning,
As soon as it's light;
I thank our kind Father,
For watch care at night.

[5]From *Songs and Games for Little Ones.* Used by permission of Oliver Ditson Co., Inc.

A few days after the song was introduced, Alston said: "You know that song about 'I wake in the morning'? Well, I waked up singing it this morning."

Who shall say that he really did not thank our heavenly Father for His watch care?

The kind of prayer induced by a song will, in a few cases, be a form, but often it is a prayer not voiced, or a prayer worded spontaneously by the child.

There are, however, as has been stated, grave dangers in adhering too much to forms of prayer. There is the danger of using the same form too often. If this is done, there is no enrichment of experience. In this case the use of the prayer is of little more value than the turning of a "prayer wheel." It resolves into a mere use of words, and becomes mechanical. An example of the difficulty of breaking away from a form prayer was brought to our attention in a vacation school, at the close of a day when the children had had an unusually good time. Someone suggested thanking the heavenly Father for their good time. One of the little children who had not sufficiently developed her prayer life immediately suggested the only prayer she knew which seemed to her suitable:

> "Thou art great, Thou art good,
> We thank Thee for our food."

One of the more thoughtful children said, "But it isn't food, it's a good time. Let's say:

> " 'Thou art great, Thou art good,
> And we thank Thee for our good time.' "

And we did!

The following are suggested prayers which may be used by parents and teachers who feel the need of forms:

THANKS FOR DAILY BLESSINGS

We thank Thee, heav'nly Father,
For rest and food and play;
For watching through the nighttime
And helping us each day.

A PRAYER FOR FRIENDS

"Dear Father, bless my friends today;
Bless all the children while we play:
Help us to be kind and good
And always do the things we should."

GRACE AT TABLE

Our heavenly Father, Thou art good,
We thank Thee for our daily food.

"For bread to eat and milk so good,
For those who work to give us food,
Thank You, heavenly Father."[6]

THE spontaneous prayer as used in the church school is the prayer which is voiced in the teacher's own words or in the child's own words at any time in the experience of the day. It is by far the most valuable prayer.

Spontaneous Prayer

1. It may come after a song.

I can remember now the joyous hush that came over a group of children at Christmas time when we had finished singing "Away in a Manger," and a little four-year-old said, "That song just makes me happy." It made all of us happy, and the simple "Thank You, heavenly Father, for sending the little Lord Jesus" was voiced by the teacher, but was prayed, I think, by all the children.

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[6]Jessie Eleanor Moore in story "Anytime, Anywhere." Used by permission.

2. It may come after a story.

A teacher told the story "Jesus Loving Little Children," and there was so much joy and thankfulness in the faces of the children that a prayer just said itself—"We are so glad, for Jesus, who loves us and all little children."

3. It may come when looking at a picture.

As the children are earnestly handling and discussing the picture, perhaps a child says, "I believe that they are saying 'Thank You!'" "I believe they are," says the teacher. "Perhaps, you should like to say 'Thank You,' too." The little voices then speak a real "Thank You."

4. It may come while enjoying some of God's creations.

One of the nearest roads from the heart of a little child to God is through nature. It is easy for the church-school teacher or parent to associate the song of the birds, the sunshine, the blooming of the flowers, the trees, the evening stars, with Him who made them.

Not all of these can be brought into the church school, although the resourceful teacher will see that her children are constantly in contact with, and reminded of, God's creations. Associations can be made that may carry over into the everyday experiences of the children.

A definite response was noted in one group when the teacher let each child smell the first narcissus that bloomed, singing over and over van Dyke's beautiful words:

> "Ev'ry morning seems to say,
> 'There's something happy on the way
> And God sends love to you.'"[7]

Those of us who are flower lovers will especially treasure the following report:

[7]Used by permission Charles Scribner's Sons.

A little four-year-old girl was in the garden one sunny spring day. After looking at the flowers for a while, she dropped on her knees beside a bed of jonquils and began to talk with great earnestness. An adult relative, noticing the child, stepped nearer and observed that the little girl had her lips close to the cup of a large jonquil as she talked. When she rose and left the flower, the adult asked her why she was talking to that flower, and the child, looking quite amazed at the ignorance of an adult, said, "I was telephoning to God. Didn't you know that they are God's telephones?"[3]

"Nature rightly interpreted speaks of her Creator." The prayer life of a little child may be greatly enriched when a true interpreter takes his hand.

5. It may come at odd times impossible to designate.

Perhaps you have been talking about the things our heavenly Father has made and you say, "I feel like going to the window and speaking to our heavenly Father. All who feel the same way may go softly with me." As a number of little people follow, you may ask, "What should you like to say?" Perhaps a little voice will say, "I love you, God," and other voices will join in.

If we are keen to watch for chances for spontaneous prayer, we may discover them in unexpected places—in song, creative work, and story, or in the midst of conversation, or play, or the solving of a puzzling problem. A real opportunity for spontaneous prayer often comes when the children are in the midst of a sharing project. They like to talk to God about their efforts for others. They can easily be led to think of themselves as coworkers with God, and talking to Him about their joint work will be natural. Often the children themselves will find an opportunity and suggest prayer.

There is, however, even in spontaneous prayers, a danger of dragging them in, as it were, and making them

[3]From a poem by Annie G. Freeman, *Children's Leader*, April, 1929. A true record of experience. Used by permission.

so commonplace that they will lose their significance and beauty.

The most important thing to teach little children is not the joy of praying in the church school, but the joy of praying anytime and anywhere. The leaders in a vacation school tried to emphasize this by the use of one of Jessie Eleanor Moore's stories, "Anytime, Anywhere." It was a joyous moment for the teachers when little John, on hearing the story the second time, seemed very appreciative as the hero stopped while riding on his kiddie car to say "Thank You" to the heavenly Father. He hardly interrupted the story-teller as he said, almost to himself: "That's just what I did yesterday on my tricycle."

Prayer in the Home

It is in the home that a sense of the nearness of God can most truly be developed—in that intimate atmosphere where a mother or a father can associate everyday happenings with the heavenly Father.

The form prayer should not have a large place here. It may occasionally be used to help to express a child's ideas, but it should never take the place of the effort which a child should make to express his own thoughts.

It is easy for parents to guide their little ones into informal expression. Perhaps the reason it is not done oftener is that it takes more time and thought than the quickly said form prayer. The beautiful example of a child's spontaneous prayer which follows was recently given by a mother.

In Rebecca's home there were Mother, Daddy, an Older Sister Sue (who had had a toe nail removed), a brother Alderson, and—best-loved of all—Grandmother.

One night Rebecca offered this prayer: "Bless Mother and Daddy, and bring Daddy safe home. Make Rebecca a good girl.

Make Alderson a good boy. Put Sue a new toe nail; and make Granny—no, leave Granny just like she is. She is all right."

Another incident which a mother confided brings a glow into our hearts:

It was Bobby's bedtime and he was very tired—so tired from a hard day's play that Mother let him skip the usual preparations for bed. She said, "We'll skip your bath, Bobby, and washing your teeth; you are so tired." Only the absolutely necessary things were done, and as she tucked the weary little boy under the cover and kissed him good-night, she said, "We'll have to skip prayers tonight, you are so tired," and then she turned out the light and left the room.

Hardly had she turned the knob of the door when a little voice called, "Mother, come back a minute."

As she stood again beside the bed, Bobby said, "I can't skip prayers tonight, Mother, 'cause He's gave me such a good day."

Incidents could be multiplied, if space permitted, to throw light on the big responsibility that belongs to parents and teachers—the responsibility of leading little children to commune with their heavenly Father.

Summary of Guiding Principles

It may not be necessary after our discussion to list the principles which should guide us in helping to develop the prayer life of children, but it may prove helpful to some of us to summarize what has been treated more or less in detail.

The following may suggest other principles which a church-school teacher or parent may add:

1. Prayers worded for children should express their own experience.
2. In helping children to pray use very simple words.
3. Forms of prayer should be more beautifully expressed than if they were spontaneously expressed by the average child, and yet should be the child's own best thoughts.
4. Do not use the same form too often.

5. Help the children to understand that they may talk to our heavenly Father anytime and anywhere.

6. Help the children to talk often to our heavenly Father in their own words.

In the very discussion of the privilege and joy of leading children to commune with God, the responsibility causes a true teacher to bow in humble dependence and pray, "Lord, teach me how to teach little children to pray."

For Assignment and Discussion

(*Choose one or more.*)

1. Discuss "The Value and Danger of a Form Prayer."

2. Examine the two versions of the prayer below. Which do you prefer to use with little children? Why?

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep;
If I should die before I wake,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to take."

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee, Lord, Thy child to keep;
Thy love go with me all the night,
And wake me with the morning light."

3. Visit a church-school Kindergarten and note the opportunities which were used for informal prayer. Were there any lost opportunities in your judgment?

4. Should you advise the church-school teacher to make available to parents printed or typed forms of prayer for use in the home?

5. From your contact with children either in the home or church school, report a real prayer experience of a child or a group of children.

Helpful Books

CHILDREN'S PRAYERS RECORDED BY THEIR MOTHER.
HOW WE CAN HELP CHILDREN TO PRAY, *Mumford.*
REALITY IN WORSHIP, *Sperry.*
TRAINING CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY, Chapter XII, *Weigle.*
THE WORSHIP OF THE LITTLE CHILD, *Baker.*

CHAPTER VIII

When and How to Tell Stories

The New Place of the Story in Religious Education

THERE was a time not many years ago when the story was "the lesson." Songs were chosen for the sake of variety; pictures had a small place in the teaching plans; creative work had no place. It is true there was some manual work, but it was merely "busy work" or a time-filler; and a real enterprise, engaging the whole-hearted co-operation of all concerned, was unknown. The story was all important. It held first place.

Today the story holds an important place, but other methods of teaching have proved their worth, and so the story is no longer the sole concern of the teacher as she selects her teaching materials. It is not that she values it less. She recognizes the fact that the story often puts a pattern for imitation before the listener, and this is well; but she knows, too, that her program must include practice in imitation in order that the story may best accomplish its purpose.

However, the discussion of the value and selection of stories is not within the province of this book, as these will be discussed thoroughly in the companion book. In the present discussion we are to think of the story more from the administrative angle—when to tell it, and how to tell it.

THERE is no set rule as to the best time in a church-school session for a story. The procedure is not built

When to Tell Stories[1]

around the story. It should be told at a time when it is really needed. Thus it will sometimes happen that the best time will be the very first moment after the group has assembled. Again the best time may be at the end of an hour's session. It is quite possible that the best time may be midway between the beginning and the end of a session. All of which is equivalent to saying, "A session with Kindergarten children should be informal, and the story should be used when it naturally fits into the experience of the children."

Recall the experience of the children in the first picture in Chapter I. Note the place of the story in the experience. It was told at a time when the children seemed to be ready for it. It would have interested them, it is true, had it been told on their arrival, but the experience of trying to make a bird's nest would not have brought the desired results had it been preceded by the story. The children would not have had the experimental attitude that made them "try out" their ability to make a nest. Then, too, the feeling of awe and wonder which their experiment evoked made it easy for them to put themselves in "Little Boy's" place as he "had a look that eyes have when a person is thinking about God and he said softly, 'Yes, it is wonderful.' "

One of the Bible stories which, it seems to me, may be used with profit either as a preface to a discussion (or conversation) and dramatic play or as a climax to these activities is "A Room for a Friend."

After hearing the story the children may enjoy talking about and dramatizing "What I would do for a friend who comes to see me"; or, on the other hand, the

[1] "When" in this connection, applies to the time for the story in the Sunday morning, weekday, or vacation session. Miss Danielson and Miss Moore are to include in the companion book a thorough treatment of the value, selection, and use of stories.

story could be withheld until after the whole subject of friendly courtesy to guests has been discussed and dramatized, and then the group will enjoy hearing of the treatment which Elisha received at the hands of his friends. This particular type of story allows more freedom as to its place in the procedure than some others. All that we have said seems to presuppose that a story will always be told to a comparatively large group of children. We do not mean to convey this impression, for oftentimes a story is told to one child only, as his need arises; or two or three children, as a vital part of an activity in which they are engaged. The important thing is to decide what we desire to accomplish by telling a story and then to fit it into the other teaching methods that are used during the session.

While we are discussing the place (from a time standpoint) of the story in our procedure, it is well to remember that it is quite possible to live through a profitable experience with children in the church school without a story. It is well also to remember that a story for Kindergarten children should be short. As a rule, it should be told in from three to five minutes, although there are exceptions to this rule.

How to Tell Stories

THE FACT that the story has a new place in the thinking of educators does not mean that less thought should be given to preparing and telling it. On the other hand, it is very important that now, while other effective methods of learning are being utilized, a great deal of thought be given to this method that is still dear to the children's hearts.

"Tell me a story while I wait for Mother to come for me," said a little five-year-old. "I like the ones about Jesus." Such requests are a challenge to us to do our

best. When we realize that through our stories little children are going to paint their own portraits of Jesus, or outline their own patterns of living, we are encouraged to put all necessary time into the mastery of stories. The time spent in taking a good course in story-telling is well spent. In such a course the student soon learns that story-telling is an art. She learns to analyze stories and appreciates them more as she separates them into their parts, watching the dramatic unfolding which reaches its peak in the climax. But—this chapter is not a story-telling course. It is an attempt to help the teacher with the actual telling of the story after she has mastered it.

Even after a well-selected story has been mastered or carefully prepared, there is still the possibility of having it prove at least a partial failure in the telling. Especially with stories for little children, the turning-point on which success or failure depends is seemingly not worth noting, but in reality is important. It may be one factor or a combination of a number of factors. Let us go carefully into a discussion of some principles for the guidance of story-tellers.

1. Seat your listeners comfortably and carefully.

At best it is difficult to hold the attention of a four or five-year-old child. If little legs are dangling from chairs that are too high, the physical discomfort is apt to affect the reception of the story. See that chairs of the proper height are used.

If the children are crowded so that one child must touch another, there is a chance for divided attention. Before you begin your story see that each child has space enough to stretch his muscles, if necessary.

If the children are seated so that the story-teller has to make a decided effort to look into the eyes of all of her listeners, interest is sure to lag.

There is no one way of seating a Kindergarten group which is acknowledged to be the only right way. In fact, it is well to have no cut-and-dried method, but from time to time to vary the method. There are times when the children may be seated in a circle; there are times when they may be seated in their chairs, informally grouped together in a rather compact group; but the best times of all are the times when they are seated happily on a big rug in an informal group, not close enough together for Tom to feel the necessity of kicking Ralph, in the effort to stretch his muscles, but near enough to feel cosy.

2. *Secure the co-operation of each child, if possible, before beginning your story.*

We have seen well-prepared story-tellers fail with stories told to Kindergarten children, because the children were not ready and eager for the story. The same method used with Primary or Junior children might not have failed, because the story itself would probably have attracted the indifferent listeners after the first sentence or two. Not so with very little children. Often when they lose the beginning they do not ever listen unless something very dramatic, such as direct discourse, forces their attention. Generally, if the stories told in the past have been interesting, the children are more than ready to listen when a story is suggested.

Sometimes, and perhaps this should be in the majority of cases, the previous activities have so prepared and interested the children that the story-teller does not even have to say she is going to tell a story. She quickly notes that each child is attentive and she begins, "Many, many years ago in a land far away."

We hesitate to suggest somewhat artificial means for gaining attention, and yet, if the group is inattentive, it

may sometimes be necessary to say, "When everybody is listening, I shall tell the story."

3. Make use of direct discourse, contrast, and repetition.

Very often an inattentive child will become attentive to a story if direct discourse is used. I can remember that as a child, when I first learned to read enough to enjoy reading "books," I examined the book recommended with a view to discovering whether or not it contained ample conversation or direct discourse, and promptly discarded the pages of solid print. A little child feels much the same about the story to which he listens. A story that is colorless may be made to live through a method of visualization which brings the characters into bold relief. A child will not be so interested to hear you say, "The kind woman asked her husband if he did not think it would be a good thing to build a room on top of the house for Elisha"; as in hearing, "The woman said to her husband, 'Let us build a little room on the top of the house for him.' "[2]

There is, however, a possibility of using too much direct discourse, thus making your attempt a dialogue rather than a story. Study carefully for a happy balance.

Contrast is a powerful method of helping the listener to see word pictures. Note in the following story the contrast between the disciples who were too busy to be bothered and the Friend of little children who was never too busy for any human need.

Jesus Loving Little Children

One day the people were crowding around Jesus when He was telling stories and making sick people well.

Everybody wanted to be near Him. They liked to hear Him talk. They liked to look into His eyes and liked to see Him smile.

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[2]See "A Sunday Morning Session in Detail," Chapter XI.

Some of the mothers had brought their little children with them.

One of these mothers thought to herself, "I wish my little child could stand very close to Jesus—so close that He could take her up in His arms."

Another mother wished the same blessing for her little child, and another mother wished it for her child. And so by and by the mothers began to take their little children through the crowd closer and closer and closer to Jesus.

The friends of Jesus, His disciples, who stood near Him, said, "Don't bother Jesus with the children. He is busy. Take the children away."

But Jesus did not like it when they said, "Take the children away." His kind eyes looked into the eyes of the mothers and soon He was holding the little children in His arms, as He said, "Let the little children come unto me." He put His hands upon the head of each little child and blessed him.

This was a happy day for the mothers, and oh, such a happy day for the children!

Repetition is especially valuable in stories for little children. It ranks with direct discourse in its power to catch and hold the attention. A familiar sentence or phrase is like a well-known friend in the midst of new associations, and is grasped eagerly by the listener. Repetition is always useful, if not overdone, and is most useful when it serves to emphasize the purpose for which the story is told. Examine the following story and note the use that is made of this valuable teaching asset.

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING

Long ago when our great, great, great grandfathers first came to this country there was a very cold winter in the land. Everything was frozen. Then came the warm spring sun, and the people planted the grains of corn or seed in the ground.

The rain pattered on the seeds, and the sun warmed the seeds. The people knew that only the planting was their part—the rain and the sunshine came from the heavenly Father.

Soon the first little green shoot came out of the ground, then came another, and another and another, and so the people knew that the crops were growing; but they knew that only the planting and the weeding were their part—the growing was the heavenly Father's part.

As the warm summer days came, the growing crops grew higher and higher and higher, and the people saw lovely golden grain on each plant; but they knew that only the planting and the weeding were their part—the golden grain which they called the harvest was the heavenly Father's part.

Then they used their long scythes or cutters and cut the grain and put it into the barns to keep. It was to be used as food for their horses and cows. It was to be ground into flour to make bread for the people themselves.

They knew that only the planting and the weeding and the cutting were their part—the harvest was from the heavenly Father.

And so they said to each other, "Let's thank the heavenly Father."

And the governor, too, said, "Let's thank the heavenly Father. Let's go to church and thank Him."

The people did as the governor said; and this was the first Thanksgiving Day in our country.

4. Watch the tones of your voice.

It will be difficult for any story-teller to improve her voice tones if she only gives thought to the voice while she is telling the story. Then, too, if undue thought is given at this time, there is likely to be an artificiality in the result.

A good voice is a most valuable asset to a teacher, and should be cultivated as a part of her general preparation for teaching. This is not the place, perhaps, nor have we space to give the practical suggestions which will help to change a nasal, harsh voice to one of pleasing quality; a thin, rasping voice to one that is of deeper tone; a loud, grating voice to one that falls on the ear drums with satisfaction. All of these changes can take place under the supervision of voice specialists and sometimes by means of self-criticism guided by the suggestions of others.

In addition to the unpleasantness of a voice that is too loud is the handicap of not being able to convey different shades of meaning through contrasts in tone. If the

story-teller habitually speaks in a loud tone, it will readily be seen that any emphasis made in a still louder tone will be distinctly unpleasant to the ear. These shades of meaning through voice tones should be spontaneous and natural—unstudied. There is nothing more objectionable than studied modulations which give the impression of a dramatic reading.

There is one exception to this rule of holding to natural voice tones. It is in the case of mimicing the sounds made by birds and animals. It really requires more practice than one would think to execute successfully the "meow" of the cat, the "bow-wow" of the dog, or the "ker-chunk" of a frog. The practice, however, is well worth while. Little children are very much more interested in Maud Lindsay's story "Out of the Nest" when you say "Brother bird listened and heard something down by the edge of the pond that went 'ker-chunk,'" instead of, "Brother bird listened and heard a frog croaking down by the edge of the pond."

Perhaps the story-teller will be discouraged at first by the flat sound that may result from her first attempt to make "ker-chunk" sound like a frog. Imagination and practice will produce a frog that at least is satisfying to little children.

The need for mimicry is not constant, but the tones of a natural, pleasing, distinct voice always add much to a story told to little children.

5. Use only natural gestures.

The question is often asked, "Should one use gestures in telling a story?"

If the gestures are perfectly natural and unstudied, the answer should be "Yes." If the gestures are unnatural and studied, the answer should be "No."

It is quite possible for a story-teller to use too many gestures, even though they are spontaneous. This indicates that too many gestures are in evidence in all of her intercourse with people; and the need for correction is a more general need than in its application to story-telling. She should endeavor in her everyday conversation to check, somewhat, her tendency to gesticulate, and her story-telling will profit by the general improvement. For her to attempt to eliminate most of her gestures in story-telling might result in artificial, wooden performances. One should not think ahead of time of gestures. They are part of the person using them. An identical gesture used by two people may prove effective in the first case and distracting in the second.

6. Do not hurry your story.

I remember once being asked to tell a certain story to an ungraded audience on a special occasion. The chairman said that the program committee had allowed ten minutes for the story, and he wanted to know if I thought I could come within this time limit. I had not previously timed myself in telling it, but thought I could easily do justice to the story in ten minutes. All would have been well had not the general superintendent, just before he announced the story, also mentioned the ten minutes. I was thoroughly uncomfortable, told the story in exactly six minutes, but was keenly conscious that it suffered in the telling.

It is hard to explain why a story suffers when the narrator does not feel that she has adequate time at her disposal—even though she omits no event—but it does. There is a hurried, breathless feeling that causes one to blur the word pictures, or to crowd the events one on the other in such a way that each does not stand out clearly. This does not mean that the story should drag. There is nothing more fatal to the success of a Kinder-

garten story than a slow, painful, dragging, uncertain style. Such a slow, painful style is not to be confused with a style that conveys the impression of ample time for the word pictures to be seen clearly—time enough even for a pause when necessary—an unhurried style which keeps the action moving swiftly and steadily.

7. As a rule do not ask questions.

In most cases the story-teller should not ask questions during the telling of the story. Many a story has been spoiled by well-meant, supposedly harmless questions, the answers to which started a new train of thought in the minds of the listeners.

"What do you think?" is apt to bring irrelevant and undesirable answers.

There are occasional chances to emphasize a truth by the use of a question to which the answer must be "Yes." There is also a wise use of the question to which "No" will undoubtedly be the answer. This use of the question should be rare and always carefully considered beforehand. It is not possible in many stories to make this wise use of the question; therefore, the safest rule is to avoid asking questions in telling a story.

8. Learn to classify interruptions.

There are certain interruptions which should be ignored and certain others which, if correctly handled, may prove real contributions.

"I have some new shoes," in the midst of the story of "Jesus and the Children," should be ignored with a sympathetic smile, whereas, "I wish I had been there" may be recognized and accepted as a contribution. It takes quick thinking and good judgment to classify interruptions, but success is sometimes the result of quick thinking.

9. Do not say, "I forgot."

When a mistake has been made do not say, "I forgot," but, if possible, cover up your mistake. There are times when the information you forgot to give is absolutely essential to the story and needs to be given, though delayed. Do so, but do not say, "I forgot." Sometimes the mistake can be covered so skillfully that the listener is not conscious of the former omission, but even if this is not the case, the statement "I forgot" does not help.

These story-telling "rules" or "principles" need not discourage amateurs. They sound more formidable than they really are. There are people who never read or heard a story-telling rule who tell stories well because they unconsciously obey the rules. There are many others, however, who only need a few suggestions to help them overcome mistakes of which they have not been conscious. If a story is a good story, it is worthy of our best efforts. No effort of ours should be too great if thereby little children are guided into Christian conduct through the power of the story.

10. Forget yourself.

One of the most important rules for good story-telling is "Forget yourself."

If the hearer sees you instead of the word picture you are attempting to portray, your story will be a failure, but if you lose yourself in what you are picturing, your story will be a vital factor in the lives of your hearers—a living pattern for right attitudes and conduct.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

NOTE.—Students who have not had a course in story-telling should read the following very carefully:

Preparing a Story

Appreciation

AFTER you have selected your story read it again for pure enjoyment without the painful thought, "I must master this story." It is not possible for you to cause another to appreciate a story which means little to you, and perhaps your own appreciation may be deeper if you do not immediately begin to look at the story analytically.

Of course a botanist is intensely interested in flowers, but I believe they mean more to him—he really loves them more—if he allows himself to feast his eyes on their colors and breathe the perfume that is wafted from their petals before he takes them apart to discover the laws governing the Master's handiwork. So, with stories, it is best that they be read appreciatively before they are studied analytically.

Analysis

SOME students have not made a study of story-telling. To them the advice, "Analyze a story," may be puzzling. For this reason we are explaining story analysis in detail.

Each story is divided into four parts:

1. The beginning.
2. Events leading to the climax.
3. The climax.
4. The conclusion.

1. The Beginning.

Some of us prefer the word "beginning" to the word "introduction" for the reason that most people understand that the "beginning" is a part of the story, whereas there are those who interpret the word "introduction" to mean something that is said by the story-teller before she begins her story.

Many stories are spoiled by being prefaced by explanations which are not at all needed. They are inartistic, and often they disclose facts which, given prematurely, strip the story of the element of suspense which is essential to a good story. There are story-tellers who have learned not to "tack a moral" to the end of the story who still have not learned not to tack a preface to the story, for which they vaguely excuse themselves under the name "approach" or "introduction" or some similar word.

The following are illustrations of "tacking on a preface"—a most undesirable practice:

"I am now going to tell you a story about a man who was not afraid of lions."

"Should you like to hear a story about a little girl who helped a man?"

"I am going to tell you a story that many little boys and girls love to hear. It is all about a dear little baby who was put into a basket boat."

"We are going to listen to a story about Jesus helping a sick man."

Please remember that all of these are "prefaces tacked on," they are not "beginnings."

A "beginning" gives the setting of the story and, as a rule, introduces the hero or heroine. If the time element is essential and the place important, they are a part of this setting.

Sometimes a "beginning" is one sentence only. Sometimes a number of sentences are needed to help the listener or reader visualize the setting. In stories for little children the sentences should be short, and the imagery very concrete. This "beginning" should be a word picture which little children can easily understand and one in which they are really interested. If a "be-

ginning" is uninteresting it is hard to induce the children to listen to the rest of the story.

The following is an example of a good beginning:

"Billy and Bobby were two little boys sitting on a doorstep wishing wishes."

2. The Events Leading to the Climax.

The "beginning" of a story for Kindergarten children should not be long. Little children are eager for something to happen and are restless under a prolonged beginning.

When "something happens" a keen analysist knows the story has reached its second stage, which is a series or succession of events leading to a climax or high point in the narrative. A careful study of good stories will show each event leading up to the next, with no superfluous or ambiguous words, no misunderstanding of the order in which the events happened—a word picture in which the actors are clearly seen by their acts, with enough descriptive words to vitalize the events so that the reader or listener may visualize as clearly as though he were an eyewitness.

It is helpful in studying a story to list the events in their proper order, as a large part of the preparation for story-telling is a visualization (not memorization) of events.

3. The Climax.

The events, in their order, should always lead step by step to one outstanding event or high point in the story. We call this point the "climax." The story writer should have this high point in mind before she writes the story. In other words, she must know where she is going before she takes the first step. A well-built story is a work of art in which the climax tops the carefully built structure.

It is equally important that the story-teller know the

climax before she begins to master her story. Telling a story without knowing the climax is like telling a joke without knowing the point. In each case the result will be a failure. It is true that it is quite possible for the climax of the story to be different for different age-groups or different occasions. The climax depends on the purpose that the story-teller desires to accomplish.

4. The Conclusion.

A young man in a story-telling class told a Bible story to the group. With the exception of one serious mistake he told it well. When the time came for criticism, after many words of commendation by the class, one student asked the teacher, "Would you have said, 'This teaches,' and then stated what the story taught?"

The teacher said, "No. We call that 'tacking on a moral.' If the story really did teach what B—— said it did, there was no need to say so. If it did not teach what he said it did, no words of his could make it do so."

The criticism was kindly given, and was received in a sportsmanlike manner, but the young man remained for a few minutes of explanation.

"Of course I knew better than to tack a moral on to my story," he said; "we have been talking about it all week. But it was this way—I was up there before the class and I had to stop and I did not know how, so I just kept on."

We can sympathize with his predicament, for perhaps the most difficult part of a story to handle is the conclusion.

It sometimes happens, but rarely, that the climax is also a proper conclusion. When that is the case, of course it is quite evident that the thing to do is to stop immediately after the climax has been reached. However, this is not often the case. In most stories a few words

need to be added to give the reader or listener a sense of satisfaction—to set the mind at rest.

While a good conclusion is not a "tacked-on moral," it may be a means of emphasizing naturally that which will help the story to achieve the purpose for which it was told. For example, in the story "God's Care of the Baby Moses" we might conclude with "And many, many times, I know, the mother remembered to say 'Thank You' to the heavenly Father for helping her to take care of her little baby."

Visualization and Practice

By the time a story has been analyzed thoroughly it has practically been mastered. It may be helpful, however, in our discussion of preparation, to emphasize the need for accurate visualization.

Visualization does not mean a conscious memorization of the events or descriptive details of a story. The best story-tellers do not memorize their stories. They see the word pictures so clearly that all they have to do is to tell to another what they see, and thus the telling becomes a joy.

Poor visualization results in a slovenly type of story-telling. Unprepared story-tellers present to their hearers word pictures which are mere skeletons. The true story-teller is an artist who fills in all the necessary details, and with a touch of color here and there leads her hearers to see living pictures. We have no right to call ourselves story-tellers when we are not willing to spend the needed time in accurate visualization. There is no excuse for slovenly story-telling, for anyone can learn to put into words an event which she sees clearly, and anyone, by concentration, can learn to see clearly the characters and events in a simple, well-constructed story.

It is helpful to any story-teller, but especially to one who is inexperienced, to tell her story to a child at home

before she attempts the more difficult achievement of holding the attention of a group of children. This practice will give her confidence and will show the weak points in her preparation that need to be strengthened.

For Assignment and Discussion

1. What is the difference between visualization and memorization of a story?

2. What is the difference between the viewpoint that the story is "the lesson" and the viewpoint presented in this chapter?

3. Prepare a story suitable for use with four and five-year-old children. Tell it to a group of children. Report as follows:

What story did you tell? Why?
How was the group seated?
Did you have attention throughout?
How long did it take to tell the story?
What interruptions did you have?
What was the response of the children?
Did the story meet a real need of the children who heard it?

Helpful Books

THE PRACTICE STORY-TELLING CLASS, *Danielson.*

CHILDREN'S STORIES AND HOW TO TELL THEM, *Esenwein and Stockard.*

TEACHING PRIMARIES IN THE CHURCH SCHOOL, Chapter VIII, *Smither.*

CHAPTER IX

Music -- An Avenue of Joyous Expression

I AM MUSIC

SERVANT and Master am I; Servant of those dead, and Master of those living. Through me spirits immortal speak the message that makes the world weep, and laugh, and wonder, and worship.

I tell the story of love, the story of hate, the story that saves, and the story that damns. I am the incense upon which prayers float to Heaven. I am the smoke which palls over the field of battle where men lie dying with me on their lips.

I am close to the marriage altar, and when the graves open I stand near-by. I call the wanderer home, I rescue the soul from the depths, I open the lips of lovers, and through me the dead whisper to the living.

One I serve as I serve all; and the king I make my slave as easily as I subject his slave. I speak through the birds of the air, the insects of the field, the crash of waters on rock-ribbed shores, the sighing of wind in the trees, and I am even heard by the soul that knows me in the clatter of wheels on city streets.

I know no brother, yet all men are my brothers; I am the Father of the best that is in them, and they are fathers of the best that is in me; I am of them, and they are of me. For I am the instrument of God.

I AM MUSIC.

—Author unknown.

Music and Religion

It is interesting to think back through the history of the church, listening to the music that has ever been linked with religion. We are apt to take for granted the place which music occupies in Christian worship, but thoughtful students have analyzed the reasons why, throughout the ages, it has been used as a preparation for, and an expression of, worship. The reasons, simply expressed, are somewhat as follows:

1. God speaks through the music of nature.

Primitive man learned to listen to the rhythmic sighing of the wind in the trees; the cadence of the waterfall; the harmony of the wavebeat on the shore; and the melody of the bird song.

He was, however, at best, a poor interpreter. The wild beating of the storm and the flash of the lightning he associated with a supernatural being, but it took several hundred years for him to stand at daybreak and listen worshipfully as "the morning stars sang together," and many more years before, his soul filled with the music of the world, he sang, "This is my Father's world."

When we quietly let nature sing to us, we do not wonder that music has been linked with religion.

2. *Music is the language of the emotions.*

When we arise in the morning full of health and vigor our hearts are full of praise to our Creator. There must be a language to express all this pent-up joyousness. What better language can be found than music?

As we stand before Niagara Falls or in view of the Grand Canyon, we are deeply conscious of the power and majesty of God. Is there not some way of giving vent to our feelings—some language through which we may express ourselves? What better language can be found than music?

In the quiet of the eventide, when the day's work is done, we stand and watch the evening stars appear. We do not feel joyous. We do not feel like shouting a majestic strain. There is a feeling of awe that sometimes leaves a lump in the throat. In some of us the awe forbids outward expression, but in some it demands a language. What better language can be found than music?

Without exhausting the variety of emotions that swell the human heart, we will concede that music is the language of the emotions and we do not wonder that it has been linked with religion.

3. *Music is a pleasing and effective medium for teaching and preserving truth.*

Someone has said that Martin Luther taught more through his songs than through his sermons.

As good poetry preserves to a certain extent the thinking of the people by and for whom it was written, so song poems often embody great truths which may find a larger acceptance through music than through the spoken word alone.

When God wanted to herald to the world the most important news ever received, He did it through the music of the angels' song.

4. Music has the power to socialize a group.

Suppose instead of one person there are half-a-dozen, or more—vigorous, wide-awake, joyous—who meet together early in the morning to chant their Maker's praise. They are no longer merely separate and distinct individuals. They are a group. The joyousness of each one has reacted on the others until there is a oneness—a group spirit—which has bound the members in a common brotherhood, and through the common use of music, an expression of an inner urge, the group is socialized.

5. Music (vocal) is an available means of expression: it may be used by most people.

Many of us desire to be painters, but cannot be. Many of us should like to express ourselves in chiseled marble or stone, but talented sculptors are rare. Many of us long to touch the violin and bid it speak the language of our souls, but there are very few master violinists. Most of us, however, can learn to sing. In fact, it is very rare indeed that a normal person cannot express himself through vocal music. And so, this God-given medium has been throughout the ages linked with religion.

Principles in Selection

ALL MUSIC does not lend itself as a vehicle for a little child's worship. Instead of naming all of the worthwhile songs that are available we shall, perhaps, do better to think together of certain principles which should guide us in the selection of worship songs for little children.

1. The words of the song should be good.

We find ourselves examining the words of a song even before we test the music; because, no matter how good the

music may be, cheap, jingly, trashy words should never be chosen.

The decision as to whether or not the poetry is good will, of course, depend largely upon the taste of the person selecting the song. Good taste can best be cultivated by constantly living with the good. Read Stevenson's "A Child's Garden of Verses" and other children's poems that are good from a literary standpoint, then measure by their standard the song poems to be chosen. Gradually there will emerge an indefinable something which makes one choose the best and discard the second-class and bad.

There are on the market a number of poor songs for children. Not even good music can make them good. We should like to bring a few of these into our discussion and definitely say why they are bad from a literary standpoint, but obviously that cannot be done in a book of this kind. It can be done in a class discussion, but the ethics of the printed page forbid it here. We can, however, do what is more valuable—we can print a few good song poems and use them as a sort of measuring rod, or standard in taste. Read them over and over until they become a part of you. Read them until you appreciate the genius that chose the best words in a child's vocabulary that could be chosen to convey a particular message.

Occasionally we find a song so simple that a four-year-old can sing it, and at the same time so great that it may be sung by a gray-haired man. This is perhaps rare, but such a song, I think, is Dr. van Dyke's "Morning and Evening."

> "Ev'ry morning seems to say,
> 'There's something happy on the way
> And God sends love to you.' "[1]

[1]Used by permission Charles Scribner's Sons.

Mrs. C. F. Alexander has given to many of us a sense of real satisfaction in her words (slightly adapted for little children):

"All things bright and beautiful,
All things large and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
Our Father made them all!"

2. *The words and ideas should be within the range of a little child's experience.*

It is a pity that every writer of children's songs could not "be a child again just for" the length of time it takes to frame the ideas that little children are asked to sing. Some people who love little children and have lived with them for years are constantly faced with the fact that they do not know the limitations or the possibilities of a child's understanding.

There is one limitation that should always be taken into account in the selection of songs for four and five-year-olds. Children of this age do not understand the use of symbols. They are imaginative, it is true; a little four-year-old mother will take her imaginary children out for a walk, or rock them to sleep in such a natural manner that they must be very real to her. This same little girl, at the suggestion that she may be a "sunbeam," will be a *literal* sunbeam. She will not symbolically "brighten the corner where she is." She will perhaps interpret as a little six-year-old friend of mine did one day when he was lustily singing "Brighten the corner where you are."

I said, "What do you mean?"

At first he tried to dismiss me with, "I don't know," and then, as I urged him to think a bit, a thoughtful look came into his face and he said, "Well, I guess it is somebody talking to the sun"—a literal rather than a "sym-

bolic" interpretation. Shall we not examine the words of our songs carefully and eliminate symbols?

3. Words should have religious value—giving correct ideas.

The song that is used in the church school should have religious value, and should be carefully chosen with this in mind. Just as Luther taught his ideas of God through his songs, so the teacher of little children may give to the children right or wrong ideas of God through the songs she uses. Right ideas of conduct toward other people can also be learned through songs.

4. The song should not be too long.

Little children cannot concentrate on one song for any length of time. Each stanza should be short enough for them to make their own. In the case of a song of several stanzas it is often wise to use only one, which fills a present need, and add another later, as it may be needed.

5. The music should be good.

Children are beginning to form taste in music as in other things. Thus a teacher who helps to create a love for the best in music is making a real contribution to their development; and, what is more important, she is providing a proper medium through which they may express their love for their heavenly Father and their thanks for His gifts. The best available music should be used for children's worship. A beautiful picture is often spoiled and cheapened when it is set in a poor frame. A beautiful song poem is likewise cheapened when it is set to poor music.

It is not easy to make clear on the printed page what we mean by poor music. The most effective method is to have a pianist play a number of songs that have been

set to good music. When they have made their impression, a comparison may be made with a cheap type which should never be used with children. Ideally everyone should recognize and respond to good music, but facts show that this is not the case. If a teacher has for years used jingly, poor music, she may need to learn to know the best in order that her taste may be improved. I have heard that artists have to keep their eye for color true by frequent tests in which true colors are used as standards. So those of us who are selecting music for children should be careful to subject our taste to standards that have been set by the best composers.

6. The music should interpret and enrich the words.

Bright, happy music should be sung to bright, happy words; and thoughtful music to thoughtful words. That is, the music should be suitable and harmonize with the spirit of the poem.

Let us take one or two songs in which the words and music seem made for each other. In the chorus of "Can a Little Child Like Me?" the words and the music seem wedded. I think the music of the chorus is much better than the rest of the song, as it is very difficult to sing the verse "legato," or in a way which blends one word with another. Consequently, it is generally rendered in a rather choppy fashion. The chorus, however, is true worship. The emphasis comes on the right words, and the composer has caught the feeling or mood of the words. Listen as a good pianist plays it. The piano seems to speak and say:

> "Father, we thank Thee,
> Father, we thank Thee,
> Father in heaven, we thank Thee."[2]

[2]From *Laudes Domini for the Sunday School,* by permission of the Century Co., Publishers.

The spirit of a different "Thank You" and an entirely different mood has been caught by the composer as she puts into melody "A Child's 'Thank You.'" The high note which voices the word "Thank" each time holds a world of joyousness. The repetition of the same tone each times serves to emphasize the thought that should be emphasized. There is a beautiful reverence conveyed in "Thank you, God, for ev'rything."

A Child's "Thank You"

Anonymous — Elda Flett Baker

Joyously

Thank you for the world so sweet, Thank you for the food we eat,

rit.

Thank you for the birds that sing, Thank you, God, for ev - 'ry - thing.

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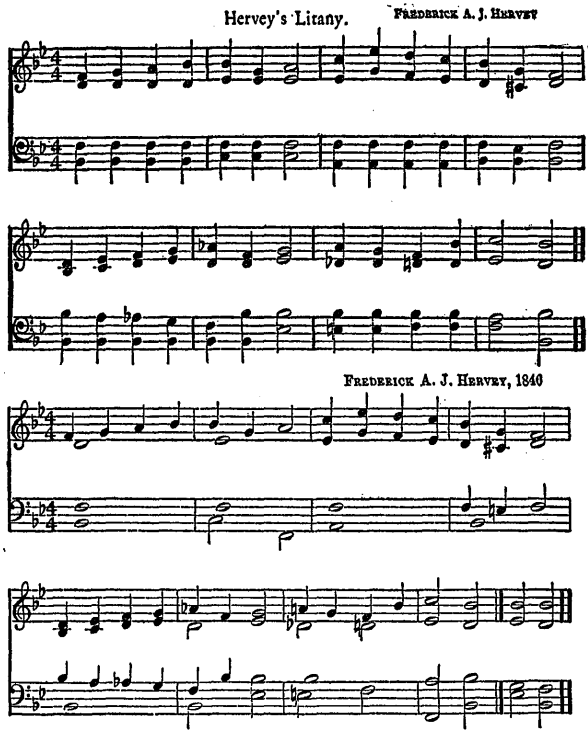
7. The harmony must be simple.

Composers of music for four and five-year-old children often make the mistake of clouding the melody of a song so that little children are confused and do not catch it readily. The songs are spoiled for children by the heavy style in which they are harmonized. They have an adult rather than a childlike quality. In the best songs for little children the melody stands out clearly, and the harmony, while good, is subordinated.

Shall we illustrate this by giving two possible methods of harmonizing? The first is "Hervey's Litany" as originally harmonized. The second is the same melody with the harmony as simplified by Miss Thomas in "Thank You, Father" in *A First Book in Hymns and Worship.*



8. The music must be within the range of a little child's voice.

Teachers differ as to the exact range of the voices of children, but the thoughtful ones all agree that the voice

of a little child is pitched high. Perhaps the best notes are g, a, b, c, d, and e on the staff. It is possible, in my opinion, to touch a note or two lower, provided the song for the most part lies within the range suggested.

One of our composers of songs for Juniors, when asked to try a Kindergarten song, tried and then reported that the task was too difficult. "It is a five-finger exercise," he said. "I give it up."

The best songs for little children really do make a large use of only a few notes; and those few are, for the most part, within the range stated above.

9. The music should not be difficult.

Perhaps, after all that has been said of simplicity of words and thought, it is not necessary to add this caution as to simplicity of music, but experience has shown that many of the songs that are taught to Kindergarten children should be classed as Primary songs, partly because of the difficulty of the music.

There are difficult intervals which are easy enough for a trained musician, but which the average child cannot readily master. These should be avoided. Accidentals, minor tones, and unusual time beats should not be used.

There is a marked difference in the musical ability of a four-year-old and an eight-year-old child. Very few four-year-old children can "carry a tune" alone. Of course there are exceptional children who can do this easily, but the music for a group of Kindergarten children should not be selected with these in mind.

In the short time which we spend with our children in the church school let us choose songs which will be meaningful in their religious development. Let us choose songs which will be full of meaning as the children pause to sing them in their play, songs which will have real significance as they kneel to pray.

MANY writers and composers of songs for little children are subjecting them to rigid tests, similar to those discussed in this chapter, and yet no one song book can so well meet the needs of a group of children as the loose-leaf song book carefully compiled by the leader of the group.

The Teacher's Collection of Songs

There are various classifications under which such a collection of songs may be chosen. Each teacher may make her own, after a brief period of experimentation. It will be helpful as a basis of classification to use the desired outcomes found in Chapter I.

Do not feel when you have collected songs designed to meet all of the needs of children to which songs can minister that it is incumbent on you to teach all of them during the two years which a child usually spends in a Kindergarten. Indeed, a small number of well-chosen songs mean more to the children than exposure to more than they can assimilate or make their own. Your complete lose-leaf book may be considered a valuable store of materials on which you can draw in time of need.

The songs selected from week to week should be chosen with your teaching purpose in mind. The lesson writer of your denominational lesson course always selects songs which she thinks should meet the needs and interests of most groups, but she does not mean to limit your choice to her choice. You will, as a rule, teach with more effectiveness a song of your own choice than one which some one else has chosen for you. It must be remembered, also, that no two groups of children respond in the same way. A response from a child may demand a song which the lesson writer could not foresee.

The carefully indexed and carefully classified loose-leaf song book containing songs culled from books and

other teaching literature is valuable, but more valuable still is the collection of songs stored in the leader's memory—songs that have become so much a part of her that, on a moment's notice, she can reach into her memory storehouse without waiting for the help of a pianist and bring out the song that exactly fits into the experience of the children.

For Assignment and Discussion

(*Choose one or more.*)

1. Watch the effect of music on a group of children and report any reactions which assure you of its value in religious education.

2. Select (according to the principles developed in our discussion of music) a song which should help to bring about a desired outcome in each of the relationships found in Chapter I. This will provide a list of eleven songs.

3. Test a number of children individually, with a view to discovering the range of their voices. Have them sing the same song in different keys and note the range that seems most comfortable.

4. Should the range of the leader's voice be taken into account as well as the range of the children's voices in choosing songs?

5. Note the song for Kindergarten children which to your mind is the most perfect example of the "wedding of words and music."

Helpful Books

STUDIES IN HYMNOLOGY, *Adams.*
MUSIC FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, *Thorn.*
THE CHILD-CENTERED SCHOOL, Chapter XIV, *Rugg and Shumaker.*
THE CREATIVE HOME, Chapters IV and IX, *Deering.*
WORSHIP OF THE LITTLE CHILD, Chapter VIII, *Baker.*
SONG AND PLAY FOR CHILDREN, *Danielson and Conant.*
SONGS FOR LITTLE PEOPLE, *Danielson and Conant.*
SONGS FOR THE LITTLE CHILD, *Baker and Kohlsaat.*
SONGS FOR THE PRE-SCHOOL AGE, *Shumate.*
WORSHIP SONGS FOR BEGINNERS, *Adams.*
WORSHIP AND CONDUCT SONGS, *Shields.*

CHAPTER X

Music—An Avenue of Joyous Expression (*Concluded*)

A THOUGHTFUL Kindergarten teacher was asked, "How do you teach songs to your children?" She replied, "I do not teach songs. I *use* them."

The Children's Use of Songs

Of course she knows that using a song is teaching it, but her very phraseology makes us think, does it not? It makes a teacher know that she should not drill a song—that while repetition is needed before the children can make it their own, the repetition should be so motivated that little children will never feel the mechanics of learning.

Perhaps it will be helpful if we think together of some of the principles that may guide us in the use of songs.

1. Use the song to meet a real need of the children.

If this principle is kept in mind it will follow that no teacher will choose a song just "because it is pretty" or "because I like it" or even "because it is good." It will be chosen because she feels that by using that particular song she will be helping to enrich the experience of her little children.

Little children are sometimes afraid of the dark. They need to have pleasant associations with the nighttime developed or discovered. There are times when a song may help to do this. It will have its largest place of usefulness in the home, preferably at nighttime. Perhaps

its next—best place will be a part of an imaginary experience at the church school. The children will have talked about the nighttime. Perhaps they will have looked at pictures like "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" or "Moonbeams" or a picture of a child asleep. While their thoughts are pleasantly associated with the nighttime, the leader, without further introduction, will sing to them:

THE PLEASANT DARK

"The cunning little birdies, with their mothers in the nest,
Love the dark, the friendly dark.
The heavenly Father sends it, and it gives them quiet rest.
He makes the dark, the pleasant dark.

"And funny little rabbits, with their mothers safe from sight,
Love the dark, the friendly dark.
They cuddle down so happily when God puts out the light,
And makes it dark, the pleasant dark.

"And happy little children, when they're tucked into their beds,
Love the dark, the friendly dark.
They know the soft gray curtain that God hangs above their heads
Is just the dark, the pleasant dark."[1]

2. Build up a setting for a song, or better still, use a natural setting that lends itself to the use of a song.

A group of Kindergarten children had been out in the church yard searching for beautiful things God had made. They came in, ready to make an enthusiastic report. As, one at a time, they brought forward their discoveries, it seemed appropriate to introduce "The Wonder Song."

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[1]From *Song and Play for Children,* Danielson and Conant. Published by Pilgrim Press. Used by permission.

It is true the children had never heard it before, but the situation was so ripe for it that it simply sang itself. It was really another way of talking to each little child to sing:

"O, who can make a flower,
I'm sure I can't, can you?
O, who can make a flower?
No one but God, 'tis true."[2]

Of course each discovery called for a slightly different wording. "Seed-pod," "red leaf," and "bird's nest"[3] were substituted for the word "flower." By the time the song had been used conversationally with each child, the group had almost learned to sing it.

In informal teaching it is often difficult to say whether a situation is "built up" or "used." In the illustration just cited, doubtless it was "built up," because even before the teacher sent the children into the church yard on their journey of discovery she anticipated to a certain extent the possible results and made the connection in her mind between the enterprise and the song which so aptly fitted into it.

There are, however, many times when a chance remark on the part of a child makes it possible to use a song at a time when it has not been planned. Such an opportunity came when David discovered a new picture and announced his discovery. It was a picture of some people standing in church singing. "I see we have a new picture" was his comment.

"What is the picture?" asked the teacher.

"It is people singing," was David's answer.

"What do you think they are singing?"

"Praise Him," was the quick response of the children.

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[2]From *Songs for the Pre-School Age*, Shumate. Published by S. S. Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Used by permission.

[3]Reported, but not brought into the room of course.

"I believe they are," said the teacher. "Perhaps we should like to sing it, too." And they did.[4]

3. Use each stanza of the song as a whole—never line by line.

Perhaps few of us are guilty of breaking up a song into lines, but there are still some teachers who have not learned to give to the children a whole word picture at one time. Such teachers would not cut Bouguereau's "Adoration of the Shepherds" into four sections, showing one at a time to the children, but they make the mistake of cutting up a song which tells the same story. They line out in singing:—

"On a bed of sweet new hay"

and have the children sing it after them, followed by the next line:—

"In a stable far away."

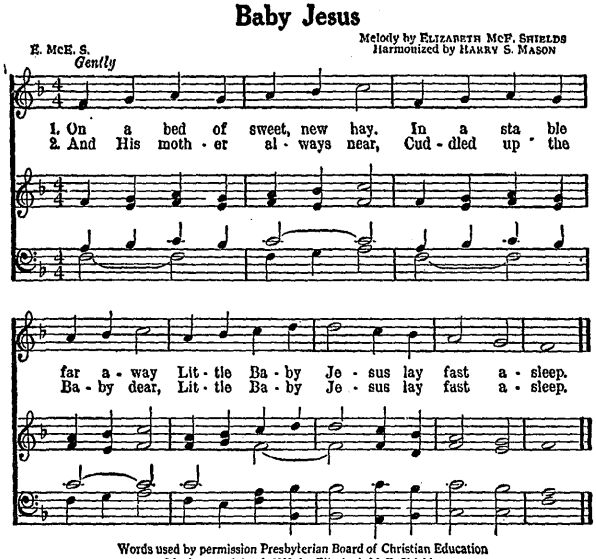
And so the leader continues, little dreaming that she is destroying a beautiful word picture. Such procedure breaks all accepted laws of memorization as well as the laws of beauty.

The entire song is given on the following page, so that you may see the complete picture.

4. Repetition should be rightly motivated—never drill.

We have implied this principle, but it needs emphasis. Many times we are so concerned that the children shall

[4]It so happened that even though the teacher had not planned to use the picture at the time of its discovery, it fitted in quite well with the conversation then in progress, else her response might have been different.



Words used by permission Presbyterian Board of Christian Education
Music copyrighted, 1929, by Elizabeth McE. Shields

be able to repeat all the words and sing the melody of a song that we have them sing over and over, forgetting that much more than rote repetition is involved in making a song one's own. It is better to take longer to teach it than to be satisfied with rote use of the words and music.

For example, we should seize opportunities for using the prayer-song "Father in Heaven, We Thank Thee" many times as a prayer. The children will soon know the words, although they are never drilled. In this connection we should say that no prayer form, even in song, should be used too often.

Sometimes one song only may be used throughout an hour's session with the children—used many, many times with meaning.

Some little children had been talking about their mothers and what they could do to help them. The teacher had sung:

"When my father goes away,
He says, 'Little brother,
You must take my place today,
Take good care of mother.'"[5]

Each little child was allowed to sing the song wth the leader. The children did not sense the fact that this repetition, which was perfectly natural to them, was helping them to learn the song. They were singing because it gave them joy.

It is interesting, however, to note that one little boy was able to sing the song perfectly at home in its proper setting,[6] even though his auntie who had visited his department during his learning experience could not remember it.

One opportunity for using the songs again and again so that they may become familiar and made the children's own is an informal "sing" when the children may gather about the piano and choose favorites. This is often a happy activity of the children who arrive early.

There are many ways of using songs without drilling them. The wise teacher will recognize the value of repetition, but will motivate it.

5. Vary the ways of using songs.

While little children love the familiar and it is well frequently to do what has been done before, it is not

[5]*Song and Play for Children,* Danielson and Conant, and *Songs for the Little Child,* Baker and Kohlsaat.
[6]His "Daddy" left town for a few days.

wise to become monotonous in our teaching. If pictures have been used a great many times, it will be well to vary the procedure and build up an appreciation through conversation or through creative work, if the song lends itself to one of these methods. A resourceful teacher will not allow her method to become monotonous. Neither will she move restlessly from one method to another so frequently that there is no feeling of stability.

6. Encourage the children to sing in their natural voices —not in loud tones.

Many little children have strained their voices by singing in loud tones. They can be led to sing sweetly and naturally if the leader sings naturally and softly. We should remember that little children have soft voices—that the singing of four and five-year-old children, technically speaking, is not calculated to impress the listener as a wonderful vocal achievement. But the children can be led to express themselves in a few songs that will be pleasing to themselves and to our heavenly Father, and that will be appreciated by those who understand this avenue of expression.

7. As a rule introduce words and music together.

There is no iron-clad rule which makes it absolutely wrong to separate words and music at times, but, as a rule, they should not be separated. This does not mean that the music to a song may not have previously been used as quiet music.

For example, you may have decided to help to give the children an appreciation of Jesus' love for little children. You plan to use the story "Jesus Blessing Little Children," and Plockhorst's picture of the story. You search your song book and find the simple and beautiful

song by Jessie Eleanor Moore, which both pictures the event and portrays the love of Jesus today for children. But—the song is new, the children have not heard it before.

Words and music will not really be separated if the music, with no particular comment, is played as quiet music by the pianist. Perhaps she will play the music a second time so that the melody will be absorbed by the children unconsciously. Then, when it seems exactly suitable, after the story has been told and the picture used, the leader may say, "I feel like singing about the picture," and she sings without the piano:—

The Children's Friend

JESSIE ELEANOR MOORE HELEN HOWARTH LEMMEL

1. Long a - go the lit - tle chil-dren Gath-ered close to Je - sus' knee,
2. Come and lis - ten to the sto - ry, Friend of chil-dren, still is He,

For His kind - ly smile said gen - tly, "I love them and they love Me."
Lis - ten then and whis - per soft - ly, "I love Him and He loves me."

Copyright, 1920, by Jessie Eleanor Moore

Perhaps our real thought is, "Do not often use words without music," rather than the reverse, because it will be quite natural after the words have been sung to the children to say, "Miss ..... knows how to play on the piano the story I have been singing. Perhaps you

should like to listen as she plays it for us. When she comes to the part that says [singing], 'I love them and they love me,' I believe I shall just have to sing with her. Do you feel like singing that part?"

Possibly you will not use the piano at all for a while, but in any case you will sing the words rather than say them.

8. As a rule the first introduction of a song should be without an instrument.

In most cases the children should be introduced to the song by hearing it sung by the leader without an instrument. In this way they accept the fact that their teacher is "telling" them something even though her medium of expression is the singing voice, instead of the talking voice. The piano is apt to cloud the words and bring more formality into the introduction. Afterwards the pianist may accompany the children in singing songs of a certain type. There are, however, many songs of a conversational type which should, in most cases, be sung without the piano. In fact, many little children sing best without accompaniment.

Songs Sung to the Children

KINDERGARTEN children can really learn to sing very few songs, and yet many times we feel that we can enrich their experience through a song which they can readily understand and appreciate, but which it will take too long to master. It can make its emotional appeal or give certain valuable information, even though we do not expect the children to be able to sing the words. The story song "Baby Moses" is such a song. "The Pleasant Dark," which we have quoted in this chapter, is another.

There is no reason, of course, why parents or other adults in the home should not use such songs so frequently that the children will learn them, but in the brief time of the church-school sessions there is certainly time to master very few.

The Creative Work of the Leader—

Adapting or Creating Songs

MANY times a song does not exactly suit the experience through which the children are living, but slight changes or adaptations will meet the situation. Until a teacher has made an effort at adaptation she may not realize her own ability and initiative.

I recently enjoyed a beautiful adaptation made by a skillful teacher of Kindergarten children. She was building up an appreciation of the wonderful and beautiful things God has made. Her children, under two competent assistants and herself, had spent some time at three tables examining and talking about the heavenly Father's creations. One group was particularly interested in the scattering of the seeds by the wind. Another was looking at an acorn that had taken root, from which a tiny oak tree was beginning to grow. The third was examining bird's nests and talking about birds. The leader then called them together and welded their experiences and gave them a chance to thank our heavenly Father through the following adaptation of a prayer-song which included the three experiences:

"Thank You for the winds that blow,
Thank You for the trees that grow,
Thank You for the birds that sing,
Thank You, God, for ev'rything."[7]

Sometimes a needed stanza can be added to a well-known song which will make it more valuable. In this

[7]Adapted from "A Child's 'Thank You.'" See Chapter IX.

way a leader who wanted to include the idea of Jesus' loving everybody adapted the second stanza of the "Children's Friend" by changing the word "children" to "ev'ryone" and omitting "still."

Occasionally teachers have potential creative gifts which only need to be developed. Out of this group will come the song writers who help little children to make melody in their hearts and with their voices.

The Creative Work of the Children—

Adults do not do all the creative work in children's music. Occasionally Kindergarten children "make up" very simple words and melodies. An illustration of a melody composed by a little child is found in the stenographic report in Chapter VI.

It is not so usual for Kindergarten children as for older children to do creative work in music, but there are rare children here and there who have found this avenue of expression.

As a means of helping the children to express themselves, I have occasionally used "chimes." It is not possible for the little folks, in using them, to make a discordant sound. They can touch some of the tone intervals on this soft instrument and sing "Thank You, heavenly Father," or "I love Him," or others words which come to them.

A Musical Instrument

"We can't afford to buy a piano, but we have an organ. Is it all right to use it?" is frequently the query of a Kindergarten superintendent.

If you cannot afford a piano, I should prefer no instrument at all to the organ, which clouds the melody—making it difficult for little children to follow.

It is well, however, for teachers to realize that it is quite possible to use songs effectively with little children without a piano. Indeed, there are many teachers who should use the piano much less than they do. Very often the informality of the song is spoiled by having to wait for the pianist, and sometimes the instrument seems to come between the simple, sympathetic song-story and the children.

However, where it is possible a piano should be in a Kindergarten room. There are many times when in the hands of a skilled musician it is a vital part of the atmosphere. A small, kindergaren piano is preferable, of course.

In departments where there is no piano, there is sometimes the possibility of getting the loan of a good victrola for occasional use. We say "loan" because the limited use would not warrant the purchase of this instrument. There are several musical victrola selections available which the children can enjoy.

The following are a few suggested records:

Victor Records

20442—Songs for Children:
God Loves Me. Christmas Lullaby. Praise Him. The Child Jesus. The Wild Wind. Rainbow. Fireman. Now It Is Spring. The Dolly.

20213—The Slumber Boat, Gaynor.

1178—Melody in F.

20174—Rock-a-by, Baby. Sweet and Low. Lullaby by Brahms. Adeste Fideles. First Noel. Nazareth.

Columbia Records

A-3118—Bird Calls.

A-3119—All Through the Night.

The Kindergarten teacher without a piano should occasionally invite a good violinist to play for the children, if one is available in the church.

Instrumental Music

LITTLE children cannot listen to instrumental music for any length of time, but they can be taught to listen, and gradually music will have meaning for them as a means of expressing joy, quiet reverence, and other emotions.

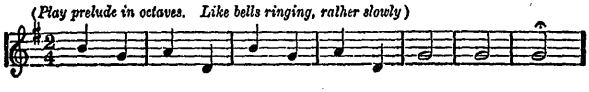
Little children need guidance in their listening. Oftentimes a piece of music has for adults such a decided association with a given thought that we are surprised when a little child does not sense it.

During the first part of December a Kindergarten leader asked her pianist to play Christmas music the first thing after the children arrived. She had not then said a word about Christmas. "Joy to the World" was played with no idea, of course, of using the words, but just because it radiates happiness. Evidently it did radiate happiness, but it did not then suggest Christmas, for when asked "How does that music make you feel?" one little fellow said, "It makes me feel like doing things for my friends." Of course "Doing things for my friends" is quite in keeping with Christmas, but I believe he would have used the word "Christmas" if he had thought it. Later in the month, after the children had heard their older brothers and sisters sing "Joy to the World," they associated it with Christmas.

Listening for something definite is helpful, as (where church bells are familiar), "Listen while Miss ..... makes the piano sound like bells. See if you can hear when the bells say, 'Come . . . . to . . . . church.' "

HARRY S. MASON

(Play prelude in octaves. Like bells ringing, rather slowly)



There is sometimes a need of "rhythmic" music. Doing what the music says, *together,* often helps to coordinate a group. A restless group will be soothed and welded together by "swaying as trees" to music of some simple rhythm. There is, however, a tendency on the part of some leaders to overdo this pleasing use of music.

"I CAN'T play well, but I suppose I can play well enough for the Kindergarten" is a mistaken idea.

The Pianist

The best musician is not too good to play the piano for little children. Indeed, if a good musician is not available it will be best to have none—using only the voices of the leaders and children.

Strange to say, many students of music learn to play creditably other types of music, but do not know how to play adult church hymns or children's music.

Mrs. Crosby Adams in her introduction to *Worship Songs for Beginners*[8] gives the following helpful suggestions:

Music should be played with a beautiful tone-quality, and the instrument should always be in tune. The tuner should be required to use what is termed "International pitch."

And to really interpret music presupposes that the one who essays it should not lightly regard this service. True interpretation calls for fidelity to the text, a fine legato and the singing touch, an artistic use of the pedal, a natural feeling for rhythm, a correct estimate of the tempi—to name just a few of the outstanding requirements. In a word, the young music student or player of extended experience who officiates as pianist for any Sunday-school work cannot do less than her best in this important post as accompanist. There will always be found among the child-listeners one or more whose soul is touched by the sheer

[8]Published by Clayton F. Summy. Used by permission.

beauty of music, and who misses something if that music is not truly expressed. I recall an instance of a player who did not bring to her work a desire to do it worthily, but stumbled along, putting in any harmony that came to her mind, rather than take the trouble to study the musical text, as written by the composer. One of her hearers, a little boy, stood it as long as he could, and then exclaimed, "There, you've gone and mussed it all up again!"

It is difficult to give advice to the pianist. Perhaps (if we may take her technique for granted) the best advice to her is "Remember that you are as truly a teacher as the other assistants. Be ready to fit into the experiences of the children."

It used to be much easier to fit into the program for Kindergarten children, because the leader wrote out a formal program and the pianist followed it; but now, since an informal method obtains, even the leader herself cannot always know in advance when a song will be needed.

It is true, however, that on account of the informality in most cases it is perfectly in harmony with the procedure to say, "Miss ....., will you play 'Father, We Thank Thee'" or "Miss ....., do you know a song about friends?" This takes any feeling of strain from her and makes for a sympathetic understanding between leader and pianist.

However, there are times when the pianist should be able to fit into the procedure without any request on the part of the leader. In order to do this effectively, it will be helpful if she, too, has a memory "store-house" of the songs and instrumental music used frequently with the children.

A good Kindergarten pianist is a rare treasure. We find ourselves wishing that more good musicians who love little children would use their talents to help little folks truly and beautifully to express themselves in song.

For Assignment and Discussion

1. Is using a song teaching it? Prove your answer by one or more of the principles of learning found in Chapter II.

2. Give an illustration (not in this book) of the use of a song that exactly met the needs of the children with whom it was used.

3. Why is it not wise to teach a song line by line?

4. Examine your teaching literature and note the various methods employed in the use of songs.

5. A Kindergarten leader is planning to take her children into the church on Sunday morning before the adult congregation assembles. What use of music can she make on this day both in the Kindergarten room and in the church auditorium? Be specific as to the method of using the music.

6. Select a song and think of an experience of children that it will enrich. Give a possible plan for using it.

7. Observe or work with a group of children over a period of several weeks. Keep a careful record of the number of times a given song was used before the children had made it their own. (Be sure to name the song.)

8. Select a simple, new song that you have begun to use with your group. Call the mothers of your children together and ask them not to drill it, but to use it frequently with the children as they work and play at home. Note the length of time that it takes each child to learn to sing the song happily.

Helpful Books

MUSIC FOR YOUNG CHILDREN, *Thorn.*
WORSHIP OF THE LITTLE CHILD, *Baker.*
DENOMINATIONAL COURSES FOR SUNDAY, WEEKDAY, OR VACATION SCHOOLS.
THE CREATIVE HOME, Chapters IV and IX, *Deering.*

CHAPTER XI

Program Procedure

PERHAPS our previous discussions have given to us a fairly clear idea of a church-school program for Kindergarten children, and yet it seems necessary that we shall attempt here to crystallize these ideas and to add to them certain emphases and necessary details.

Elements of the Program

We almost hesitate to name the elements that enter into a Kindergarten program, for fear some one will make the mistake of thinking that each element stands alone and has a separate place in the procedure. This is not the case.

A few years ago an acceptable program for Kindergarten children read something like this:

Worship.
Fellowship.
Instruction.
Service.

When we wanted to be still more accurate we divided the hour into periods, and designated the number of minutes to be allotted to each.

This seems to us now, in the light of our present knowledge of little children, a most formal and strange procedure. A wise student of child nature today will not make such a mistake. She knows that worship may be so interwoven with all other activities that it is often im-

possible to think of it apart from the rest. In fact, the elements that enter into the experiences which little children have together in the church school are so interwoven that they cannot be separated.

Even though we rule out the formal divisions of a program procedure which separates a Kindergarten session into compartments, we must still admit that there are certain elements which should be in evidence in the church-school experiences of little children. It is easier to feel these than to name them, because the very naming tends to set them apart, each from the other. However, a thoughtful discussion of the elements which together help to give the richest experiences to our children cannot be amiss—the spirit, or element, of worship; the spirit of friendliness or sharing; and the spirit of acquiring knowledge.

Worship may result from friendliness and from the acquiring of knowledge, or it may be a part of both of these elements. Friendliness may result from worship and from the acquiring of knowledge. Knowledge may be gained through worship and through a friendly sharing. And so all are interrelated.

I wonder if we can make this interrelationship of elements clearer by a crude attempt at illustration in a kindred situation: You desire that happiness, orderliness, beauty, and quiet (as well as other elements) shall enter into the program of your daily home life. Do you separate them in your thinking? No, you wisely realize that happiness depends somewhat on orderliness, beauty, and quiet. They are all interrelated. You do not set apart ten minutes in your schedule for happiness, fifteen for orderliness, and so forth, but you balance your program to include sufficient orderliness, beauty, and quiet; and happiness largely comes through the activities connected with these.

As has been said, the illustration is a bit crude, but it may serve to show that through the activities connected with a friendly sharing and gaining of knowledge worship may be developed.

Having safeguarded a discussion of these elements as best we can, shall we discuss them in detail?

Worship—

Worship is the communion of a child with his heavenly Father. There can be no higher purpose of religious education than that of leading children into a vital relationship with God—of making Him so real that little children will instinctively turn to Him in their joys and perplexities, at home, at church school, and day school—in work and play.

It is needless to say that in planning our procedure the element of worship should have a large place in our thinking. So many things make or mar the atmosphere that should be conducive to worship. The appearance of the room, the attitude of the leader and helpers, the manner of introducing the songs, stories, play, and pictures, and the very tones of voice in voicing prayers, all make an impression on a little child, making it either natural or difficult for him to worship.

"There should be something about the atmosphere of a Kindergarten which makes the superintendent feel that at any moment there may come joyous or quiet responses which show that the children have been brought near to God; which makes the pianist and helpers feel a sense of privilege at being able to contribute; which makes the regular visitor pause before entering the door for fear she will disturb the atmosphere; which makes the chance visitor desire to come again that she may feed her soul; and which makes each child feel, 'I love to come to the

heavenly Father's house. It makes me happy. My teacher loves to come, too. It makes her happy.' "[1]

This atmosphere of worship is not so likely to be felt in a department where a formal, stated worship service is in the order of procedure as where opportunities are seized when the responses of the children show that they are ready for worship. For it must be remembered that a child cannot be forced to worship: a bowed head and pious words repeated do not always indicate worship.

It is well also to remember that many worship experiences may come to little children at times when they are not in the church school, as results of their experiences in the church school. This makes it important that we shall not only live with our children through actual worship experiences, but that we shall help to initiate ongoing experiences which will later result in worship.

It is not always possible for one person to know when another worships, but the following are given as, in the judgment of observers, examples of worship.

1. On Easter Sunday, the Kindergarten leader said to her group, "This morning I went into the big church. It is so pretty there I thought you should like to go. There are Easter lilies. There are beautiful window pictures. It is very quiet there. I felt 'Surely God is in this place.' When you come back we'll talk about what you saw."

Groups of six children with one teacher for each group went into the church. When the first group returned they came right to the leader. It had been about ten minutes before this group returned. Just their teacher, the six children, and the leader were present when they told of their experience in the church. Immediately Ralph said in a hushed voice, "I felt like God took hold of my hand in there." His face, his manner, and voice portrayed real reverence and communion.—*Reported by a teacher.*

2. We had just sung "Away in a Manger," when a quiet little fellow, not accustomed to making verbal contributions, said, "You know, that song just makes me happy."

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[1]International Standard for Beginners' Department.

One after another, the children followed with, "It makes me happy, too."

When, at the leader's suggestion, they talked to our heavenly Father about it, there were a few moments of real worship.

3. It was snowing very hard. Helen was watching it from the window and said, "God sends the snow, doesn't He."

I said that He did, and she replied, "I just *love* the heavenly Father, don't you?"—*Reported.*

4. Last Easter three children went to take flowers to the children's ward of the city hospital. The sight of the sick children who had no loved ones around made quite an impression on my own children.

That night while praying, one of the children said, "Thank You, God, for Mother to take care of us when we are sick, and make those sick children well."—*Reported.*

The illustrations above may have given the impression that worship experiences of little children should not ever be planned in advance by an adult. We do not mean to give such an impression—even though oftentimes the unplanned moments of worship are times when little children feel closest to God. There are occasional times when the group worship experience may be a bit formal, but this formality should be the exception and not the rule. One little group of children enjoys playing "Big Church" occasionally. They arrange the chairs in rows and are guided to their seats rather formally. They choose the songs they will sing, a Bible verse to repeat, and perhaps a story to which they will listen. They discuss the prayer that will be used. All is planned in a way that shows that it is planned, and they enter into the plan and sometimes truly worship. If, however, this were the plan *every* Sunday, they would not be so likely to feel the presence of God. The occasional formal worship can never take the place of the worship that comes from a realization of the presence of God as the children have planned a gift for a needy friend, or talked to-

gether about some problem or joy, or have listened to a story of the helpfulness of Jesus. The important thing to be kept in mind is reality. We must be sure that the spirit or element of worship is interwoven with all of our activities—that we can feel the nearness of God as we work and play together.

Friendliness or Sharing—

The element of friendliness or sharing should have a large place in our plans. It should be evidenced by a courteous welcome to new pupils and absentees, by a friendly sharing of experiences in happy talk, by sympathetic thought for members of the group or church friends who are sick or in trouble, by thoughtful recognition of happy events in the lives of these same friends, and by sharing work and play materials.

The expressions of friendliness may be and should be in most cases incidental. In fact, the event which should call them forth is often unknown to the teacher until she reaches the church school. These expressions, like courtesy, do not take so much time as thought. In the case of a new pupil, much will depend upon the pupil. If he is timid, he will not want to be singled out for too much special attention. Sometimes a courteous recognition from the teacher is all that is needed. "Wilbur Tompkins is with us today. We are so glad to have him," may be all that shy Wilbur desires on his first Sunday.

Personally, I tire of the constant singing of a welcome song. Like everything that is overdone it grows monotonous. There are ways of making a child welcome that he appreciates more. If the newcomer arrives early, one or two members of the group may show their picture books to him or share the other church-school treasures.

A word of welcome to the returned absentee is sufficient. The children may be led to show special consideration for such a one, as well as the new pupil, by waiting turns and by foregoing special privileges in his favor.

Sympathy in trouble and recognition of happy events, in some cases, will find expression in a brief prayer for the friend.

Birthdays of the children are among the very happiest events which furnish an opportunity for developing the friendliness of the group. The celebration of a birthday is a part of the procedure which may be planned in advance, as the teacher, of course, has a record of all the birthdays in her group.

The celebration should be simple, and yet the day may be made to stand out as a red-letter day for the birthday child. Little children dearly love to have the postman bring letters to them. For this reason the birthday card may be mailed.

Sometimes in celebrating a birthday in the church school a birthday song may be sung, but always a birthday prayer is appropriate. Sometimes a formal prayer, such as the following, may be voiced by the teacher and the children:—

> Father, bless our friend today.
> Help him in his work and play;
> Help him to be strong and good,
> Loving, helping as he should.

Sometimes an informal prayer means most. The following is a type: "Dear heavenly Father, thank You for Betsy. We are happy with her on her birthday. Amen."

Remember that it is the element of friendliness that is to be desired, rather than elaborate technique for its expression.

The arrival of a new baby in one of the church homes is an event which only needs to be announced to cause a spirit of friendliness to radiate toward "Mary who has a new little brother."

Your church should be a big family, sharing joys and sorrows. Very early little folks can catch the spirit of friendliness which rejoices in our minister's new automobile, Grandmother Gordon's eightieth birthday, and Mary's new baby brother; while it sympathizes with Sue who is at home with measles, and the Granbys whose house caught fire last week.

The spirit of friendliness which is fostered in the church school, as we have said, should find an outlet in the home. Most adults do not use and provide normal situations where a little child may be trained to share and help. The home is often to blame, and yet there are times when parents would gladly use and help to provide situations if they only knew the plans of the church-school teacher. John's mother would not have said, "Never mind, John, I'll put the milk bottles out myself," if she had known that, a few days before, the children in the church school had decided that putting out the milk bottles was a good way to help mother. Co-operation between the church school and the home will very greatly help to train the children in worthwhile service.

The missionary activities of little children may reach out even beyond the home.

In addition to the many everyday opportunities for friendliness, there are special days such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter when the children may engage in some enterprises that may bring much happiness to them and to the recipients. Sometimes a contact may be made with "far-away" friends. Picture cards and

messages may be shared. The following letter was received by a Kindergarten group in acknowledgment of some pictures pasted on correspondence cards and sent as gifts to the children in a Kindergarten in China. The letter was written by a Chinese teacher and translated by Miss Bailey:

AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL SMALL FRIENDS:

Miss Bailey gave us the picture cards you sent to us. When we saw them we were so happy. We are sending you our picture. It was taken one day at school. Our teachers are standing behind. This is the first four grades. We want to tell you that we love you too. We also have a Beginners' Department in our church school, and we love to sing and hear the stories about Jesus, just as you do. Let us pray for each other. Though we are several thousand miles apart we can feel that we are together if we have Jesus.

"Ping An"—We wish you peace—

YOUR LITTLE FRIENDS AT SUTSIEN,
KIANGSU, CHINA.

As a rule Kindergarten children do not have much money to give. It is more important that a child's gift be properly motivated than that it be large. In most cases the gift of a toy or some loved object will mean more than a money gift. Of course five-year-old children, and even four-year-old children, are beginning to learn that things can be bought with money. A small weekday group of Kindergarten children may together go to a florist shop to buy a flower to give to a sick friend, or the same group may go to the ten-cent store and buy toys for children in an orphanage. One or two experiences of this kind will help Kindergarten children to understand the joy of using their money as gifts, and

will help to make real the giving of money in the regular Sunday offering.

Many teachers who recognize the value of cultivating a spirit of friendliness have failed to make use of the most natural means at hand of helping to develop this spirit—that is, the sharing of work and play materials. It is well to remember that one of the most important reasons for including these materials in our curriculum is that through their use a spirit of Christian friendliness may be fostered.

Acquiring Knowledge—

There must be in our plans for a Sunday, weekday, or vacation session a provision for helping our children to acquire the right kind of knowledge. As we have said, this knowledge will best come as a part of all the activities of the hour, but there must be a conscious effort on the part of the leader to help the children to "know." They must know the nature of God before they will desire to worship Him. They must know what Christian friendliness is before they can practice it. And so the child comes to know, or get a pattern of Christian living, through the use which he makes of stories, poems, verses, pictures, certain types of songs, dramatization and other creative work, and enterprises of various kinds. Most of these materials of religious education which are associated in our minds with the element of "acquiring knowledge" are discussed in detail by Miss Danielson and Miss Moore in the companion book which supplements or completes this one.

"IF," ASKS the eager student, "our program is to be child-centered, can a teacher really plan her procedure ahead of time?"

Steps in Planning Procedure It is our conviction that the teacher who has thought most carefully of a possible procedure can better use constructively the initiative of the children than she who goes to church school with no particular plans. It is true that plans should be modified by the responses of the children and therefore should be elastic, but certainly there should be careful planning.

The following steps in program planning may serve to show that a procedure may be worked out ahead of time and still be informal.

1. *Decide on your purpose for the day.*

This purpose, of course, must be formulated in the light of a more comprehensive purpose.[2] It must not grow out of your desire to tell a certain story to the children, but must grow out of a real need of your children.

2. *With your purpose in mind list all of the various activities which should help to accomplish your purpose.*

Of course you will not expect to use all of the materials and activities listed. The list is for the purpose of choosing the best available activities for accomplishing your purpose. It may be that your purpose is "To help little children to know and love Jesus." It will readily be seen that this is to be an appreciation lesson, and not a conduct lesson. The stories, songs, pictures, and so forth, will be chosen with this in mind. You will not be so much concerned with what the children are going to do when they leave you at the end of the hour as with what they are going to feel. This will not be a time to

[2]Recall Chapter I.

emphasize helping and sharing. It will be a time to bring little children very close to the Friend of little children. If the indirect result of this close contact with and love for Him afterward displays itself in service, we may be happy, but our chief concern now is one thing, and that is "to help little children to know and love Jesus." Do not scatter your teaching. Think carefully, and then list all available activities for accomplishing your purpose.

3. *Consider the time at your disposal, the necessity for frequent change of activity, the inability of little children to master too much new material, and then select only those activities which in your judgment will best accomplish your purpose.*

While Sunday, weekday, and vacation-school programs may avail themselves of the same type of activities, using practically the same materials, a choice of activities must be made largely on a time basis. For example, the session of a vacation school is, as a rule, longer than a Sunday session and therefore allows more time for creative work, games, and so forth.

Simultaneously with the question of available time the question of a proper balance should be considered. Perhaps you have on your list of available materials several songs. While songs are most enjoyable and helpful it is not wise to overbalance a program with songs. If this is done the children will tire of them, and something else that is good will have to be excluded. Decide on the number of songs and choose the very best for your purpose. Perhaps it will be only one. It is quite possible to use effectively one song only, by repeating it at intervals in the procedure.

The same discrimination should be used regarding stories. One new story should be the general rule. There

should, of course, be provision for the recalling over and over again of the old ones.

We often have to make a choice between dramatization and other creative work.

It is well to remember in our planning that all of the activities chosen should not be of the very stimulating type. If you plan to use a story that requires several minutes of quiet listening, then perhaps you will plan to let the children stand by the piano as they sing, thus giving them a change of posture. If you plan for a spirited dramatization, you may plan to follow this by a rest time, in which for a few moments they will in imagination go quietly to sleep while the heavenly Father keeps watch. You may plan to sing a soft lullaby to them.

NOTE—The inexperienced teacher, for a while, will do well to make use of the plans of the lesson writer, who on account of her experience is able to plan a balanced procedure, to meet the needs of the average group. These plans will always need to be adapted, but should be carefully studied.

A Sunday Morning Session in Detail

WE REALIZE that there are many teachers of little children who cannot, or think they cannot, use an informal procedure. All that we have said about the elements of a program, balance, and choice means little to them. They say, "Tell us exactly what to do."

They would find a formal, drill type of program easy to follow, but we cannot conscientiously give such a type in order to make it easy for them. We do want to make it as easy as possible for our teachers, but this is not our first concern. In most cases where teaching is very easy for the teacher, learning is very hard for the child.

We are not willing to give a cut-and-dried schedule, but plans for a guided learning experience of Kindergarten children are given below in detail.

WHEN GUESTS COME

THE CHILD'S UNGUIDED ATTITUDE:

An indifference to the happiness of guests who come into the home or Kindergarten.

DESIRED OUTCOME:

Joy in sharing the hospitality of the home or Kindergarten with friends who come to visit.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

Looking at Pictures:

When the children arrive they may find a number of pictures placed on the tables, and on picture rail—pictures of children engaged in play activities in which sharing takes place. Each assistant should feel responsible for mingling with the groups and through tactful questions help in the interpretation of the pictures. After a few minutes the children about the room may be called together by

Quiet Music:

When they have listened for a short time there may be

Conversation about Playtime:

Let each little child tell of the happy times he has had during the week. Almost inevitably the thought of "friends" will come up. This will lead to the singing of the

Song, "FRIENDS":

Friends! Friends! Friends!
I have some friends I love!
I love my friend and he loves me,
I help my friend and he helps me;
Friends! Friends! Friends!
I have some friends I love.

Friends! Friends! Friends!
I have some friends I love!
I share my games and share my toys
With all my friends, both girls and boys;
Friends! Friends! Friends!
I have some friends I love.[3]

If the singing of the song brings further discussion, continue it. Perhaps the children will enjoy catching hands and skipping as they sing about their friends. Then let them seat themselves comfortably to listen to the

Story:

A Room for a Friend

THERE was once a man who used to go up and down the road—up and down the road.

His name was Elisha.

He was one of God's friends who went places helping people.

The road was often dusty, and Elisha was often hot and tired and hungry.

The people inside their houses did not always think of kind things they might do for him, but one day as he passed a house, the woman who lived there said, "Won't you come in and have dinner?"

Elisha went in and took dinner with the woman and her husband.

They liked to have him in their home, so they said, "Every time you pass this way be sure to come in," and he did.

One day after Elisha left, the woman said to her husband, "I see that this is a holy man of God who goes up and down the road. Let us build a little room on the top of the house for him."

So they built a little room just for him. They put a bed in the room and a table and a stool and a candlestick.

It was a lovely thing to do for a visitor.

The room was a happy resting place for Elisha; and many times when he was tired he would walk up the outside steps to his little room and quietly rest and think of the kind friends who were so good to him.

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[3]From *Worship and Conduct Songs*. Copyright, 1924, by Elizabeth McE. Shields.

Oriental House:

After the story, show an oriental house. This object should not be in view until after the story has been told. The children will delight in handling it and asking questions about it.

It will be easy now to encourage the children to

Play, "WHEN A GROWN-UP FRIEND COMES TO SEE ME":

Let one of the assistants be the grown-up friend and go outside, while the children show how they will fix the room when she comes to spend the night at their house. She may then knock on the door and be admitted by a child. Different ones may dramatize what they would do for her comfort. When this activity has served its purpose, all of the children may catch hands again and sing the

Song, "FRIENDS":

It may rest the children if they play that night has come and the household and guest are going to sleep. Let them lie down on the rug for a

Rest:

Sing a soft lullaby and let them really rest for several minutes. Then resume the thought of guests, suggesting that often children come to see us. Encourage the group to

Play, "WHEN A CHILD COMES TO SEE ME":

Let those who desire take turns in taking the part of the child-guest—knocking on the door, being admitted by a child, and invited to share games and toys. The group will dramatize "sharing games and toys," spurred on by occasional suggestions from the leader.

After a few minutes devoted to this activity, the children may examine a

Picture:

This may be a picture of the Bible story or a picture which shows a child acting courteously to a friend.

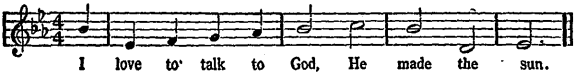
Real Play Experiences:

In order that the children may have real sharing experiences in play, four or five of the older Nursery children may be in-

vited to come into the Kindergarten at this time. The previous activities should have helped to give to the Kindergarten children a pattern of desirable conduct for this real experience. Perhaps the leader will say, "How should you like to invite some little guests to come into our room and play with us?" A way of inviting the guests may then be discussed and a child chosen to take the message to them. Before the messenger goes, however, there may be a discussion of some things that it will be pleasant to do. The children themselves will think of activities. If they do not, the leader may say, "I do not know what our guests will enjoy the most. We shall have to tell them of all the toys and playthings we have, so that they can choose. Of course we shall play *with* our friends, but we know how to treat guests I am sure." Such play materials should be available as a doll and buggy, doll table and dishes, blocks, picture-story books, toy animals, crayons and paper and plasticine. The guests may be invited, and the children with the guests may choose their desired activity. The leader and assistants will mingle freely with the different groups. They may possibly find it advisable occasionally to sing softly as a reminder, "I share my games and share my toys." Ample time should be given to help the children complete play experiences.

A large prism may be reserved as a pleasant surprise for the Kindergarten children and their guests. Just as the playtime is over, the leader may place the prism in the window and flash the bright colors on the wall, letting the children take turns in getting in the path of light. When the children discover that the colors come from the sun, the leader may sing with no introduction, as a part of the joyous experience, the

Song, "I Love to Talk to God":[4]



The playtime will now be over, and the children may want to talk to the heavenly Father, so they will bow their heads in

[4]The words and melody of this song were the creative work of a Primary child. The music notes were written down by the teacher. The original words were, "I love to talk to God. He made the flowers." It lends itself to a variety of uses.

Prayer:

The prayer may be somewhat as follows:

"Thank You, dear heavenly Father, for giving us such a good time with our friends. Amen."

NOTE—In apportioning the time the "Real Play Experiences" should be given the major portion of time, and yet it is important that enough time should be allowed for the make-believe play through which the children formulate their patterns of action.

Problems in Procedure

A TREATMENT of program procedure does not seem complete without a recognition of a few of the special problems which are likely to confront an inexperienced teacher.

From Formality to Informality—

It is not always easy to take a group of children accustomed to a formal teaching procedure and launch a procedure that is altogether informal. This is especially true of a group that is large. The effect, at times, seems to be a sort of intoxication of freedom—an aimless, disconcerting activity on the part of the children that causes an inexperienced teacher to question the wisdom of the adherents of informal teaching.

There is a happy medium between autocracy and license that should be our goal, but a wise teacher will sense the fact that some groups interpret liberty as license and she will act accordingly. For example, a teacher who had been accustomed to leading children informally took charge of a group that was not accustomed to her method. When she asked, "Can anyone find a picture that makes you think of the nighttime?" there was a bedlam of voices and a rush for the picture. Naturally, this should not be; so the next time, keeping a firmer hold with her guiding hand, she said, "I do not want you to say a word, but I want you to look very

carefully at all the pictures you can see. When you find the one I am thinking of, you may put your hand on your head. I am thinking of a picture that says, 'He cares for me.' "

It was not long, of course, until the children learned to take turns in conversation and in the various other informal activities, but they learned gradually, and as they learned they were given more freedom.

One of the problems that confronts a Kindergarten leader who accepts informality in teaching is the problem of knowing when the children should think for themselves and when she should share her thinking with them. May we take time to relate the working out of one situation in our effort to show that, gradually, even little children may be allowed to think for themselves?

A group of children had no inhibitions when it came time to take the offering. At least twelve of the twenty-six demanded aloud, "Let me take it."

There were two ways of handling this situation. The teacher could have said, "As there are so many who are talking at once it is hard to let anyone hold the basket today, so I shall hold it." That might have helped, but she was anxious, if possible, to guide them to think through the situation and to help them to learn that each one cannot have his own way and cannot always do the thing he wants to do, regardless of the rest. So she said, "We cannot all hold the basket. I wonder if you can think of a way that will make it so that just one will hold it?"

Someone said, "Let the one that asked first," and before this suggestion could really be considered a chorus of voices assured the leader that "I was the first."

There followed a discussion of the wisdom or lack of wisdom and fairness of this suggestion, and, fortified by the backing of the assistants, she declared that there must be a better way. One little girl suggested, "Couldn't one hold it one Sunday, and one the next, and one the next?" The teacher expressed herself as thoroughly in sympathy with this, but on trying to arrive at a method of choosing the "one" who was to be first it developed that each one wanted to be first, and so they were practically where they had started.

As there was no good way suggested by the children, the adult suggestion was made, "Since we cannot think of the best way today, suppose I put the basket on the table, and then each of us will go to the table and put our gift in the basket. When we go home we shall try to think of a way to do. Maybe you will talk it over with Mother and Daddy. I hope when you think of a way, it will not be a way that makes you the first one."

We were really surprised to find that some of the children actually did give thought to the problem. One mother, who knew of the situation, telephoned the leader and said that her little boy had discussed it with her. "But," she added, "there is a great deal of ego."

When it was time to take the offering on the following Sunday, one little boy, of his own accord, volunteered, "I have thought of a way. Couldn't one take the basket and put his money in, and give the basket to the next one and then he could put his money in, and give it to the next one?"

This seemed a very wonderful plan to have been proposed by a little five-year-old, so we tried it happily.

The next Sunday a little girl came to the leader and said, "I have thought of a way. Couldn't one stand up and hold the basket, and all of the children come to that one?"

Of course we could do that, if we could just decide on that *"one."* I wish you could have seen the expression of real sacrificial willingness to serve on the face of the suggester as she agreed, "Well, I will do it *today.*"

And so, we let the matter "seep in" through several weeks, and then in an amused desperation the leader said to an assistant, "I don't know how we can thoroughly meet this problem unless some child suggests that I be trusted to choose one of their number each Sunday who may hold the basket." This assistant assured the leader that she did not mention any names, but did say to one of the children, "I believe it would be a good way for someone to choose a child each Sunday." And so at last this proposition was voiced by a child. However, when the leader agreed that this was an excellent plan and then said, "Who do you think should choose?" the answer came back, "I believe Fletcher would be a good one to choose the one." Quite democratic, was it not?

A second child then spoke up and said, "I believe Miss S. would be the best one to choose the one because she will be here every Sunday."

And so the leader was allowed to choose, and incidentally the children did some thinking.

An interesting aftermath of this thinking came a week or so later when David arrived very early and was allowed to help to place the pictures.

The leader appreciated his efforts, but perhaps he was sorry that his task was completed before the children arrived. They did not know how important he had been. To remedy this, as soon as all of the children had gathered and a song had been suggested, he looked at one of the pictures and said, "I don't believe that picture is in the best place." When, however, he attempted to find a better place, there was none, and he admitted it, but said, "I tell you what we will do. We'll *think* about it until next Sunday and then find a place."

Individual and Group Directions—

Some of the problems in co-operation are easily understood if we pause to remember that the four-year-old children have been accustomed to being treated as individuals. Mother looks Frances in the eye and says, "Sit in this chair, dear," and Frances is not confused. She knows that the directions are meant for her. But when she goes to the church-school Kindergarten there are perhaps a dozen other little boys and girls, and the teacher says, "Let's go to the corner of the room and play we are coming to church." Frances is confused, because the directions are given to the group of children, and she has not yet learned that directions given to the group are the same as individual directions.

An illustration of this was Sam, to whom we referred in Chapter IV, a little four-year-old who was glad to enter into our activities but did not understand that he was invited until called by name and given an individual invitation to look at the pictures, or go out into the yard, or stand by the piano.

Sometimes where it seems especially difficult for a group to follow directions, it may be well to take a

moment or two, occasionally, for the use of a few rhythmic suggestions. In this way the children will learn to listen.

Watch these little individualists and give your group directions very clearly and simply, and gradually they will learn to think "we" instead of "I."

What to Do with Visitors—

In some cases visitors are an asset, and in others a liability.

A leader was glad to have a number of visitors on the day last fall when she and her children went out into the church yard to find beautiful things God had made. Many of the children were very young and were decidedly individualistic. They were quite willing to put a hand in that of a sympathetic adult and go on a walk of discovery, and they were the gainers that day because there were enough adults including the assistants to allow one adult to a group of two or three children.

If your visitors are sympathetic and understanding they will not be a problem, provided there is space in the room for them. If they are sympathetic and understanding they will not comment on the responses of the children nor will they converse among themselves. The children will accept the right type and will include them in their activities. The wrong types have no place in a Kindergarten.

The pastor should be a welcome visitor, and should be drawn into the group and made to feel at home. In fact, definite plans should be made to bring about a visit from him if he does not happen to come.

Projects in becoming acquainted with children of other races may often include visits from children of other races who are in the community, or a visit from a

sympathetic missionary who will be content to answer questions and share the part of her experiences which little children can appreciate.

There are other visitors who make definite contributions to the religious education of little children. A wise leader will sense the need for certain contacts and will plan for them.

As most of the church-school contacts of the children are with women and children, it will be well to plan for helpful contacts with men. We have mentioned the pastor. The general superintendent, also, should be a welcome and frequent visitor. "Daddies" may sometimes be invited specially. A friendly man who wandered into a Kindergarten group not long ago as a visitor was welcomed and invited to join the group as they played "Big Church." His reverent participation was helpful and stimulating to the group. If we are alert to the need of the children for more contacts with men who have a contribution to make to their development, we will use and make opportunities for including these friends in our group.

There should be, if possible, a parents' class, and an understanding that from time to time a small group of parents may attend the children's session provided there is ample space.

When Shall We Take the Offering?—

While the taking of the offering has a place in each Sunday's procedure, it is not possible to say just when God's blessing shall be asked on the contributions of the children. It is well for them to deposit their gifts on their arrival, because little hands need to be free for the various activities of the day. I do not believe that there is any real danger of a feeling of "pay as you enter" on

the part of the chiildren, if the children have a share in deciding on the use that is to be made of their offering—if they understand why they are giving. Very soon they come to realize that a little child can help God to "take care of little babies" or to "send a story lady to tell little children about Jesus" or to "buy good food for some little children whose daddy is sick."

The offering basket may be brought forward at any suitable time. A prayer may sometimes be spoken or sung; or the "Offering Hymn" from *Songs for Little People,* or some other appropriate song, may be sung. Often a spontaneous prayer will be better.

Observance of Special Days—

It is occasionally a problem to include special days in our church-school program and to vitalize them in the experience of our children. Of course there is no question of the value of Thanksgiving and Christmas and Easter. They can and should be meaningful. Most teachers' helps not only recognize them, but build their procedure for several weeks around the experiences which culminate in these special days. The problem, as a rule, is to fit the Kindergarten plans into the plans of the whole school. Sometimes, in an effort to co-operate with the adult departments, the Kindergarten leaders will cause their children to lose the real meaning of the day that should stand out in a special way. On the other hand, general superintendents and church-school officers are quite reasonable when reasons are clearly given. There are, of course, exceptions, but as a rule the observance of Thanksgiving, or Christmas, or Easter is most meaningful when it takes place in the Kindergarten room and is the culmination of the activities of several weeks.

There are, of course, some special occasions when the whole church school, including the Kindergarten children, should meet as a big family. Even at these times, it is best to let the children remain only a few minutes, make their contribution, and retire to their own room. Such occasions call for careful planning, if the children are to be safeguarded. Unless there is cooperation on the part of all of the adults in the church, it is difficult to keep the children from feeling that they are "showing off." On the other hand, a Kindergarten leader with the right viewpoint can help her children to feel that they are a part of the church family and are glad to share with the rest of the family one of their songs. They need not drill or rehearse the song. If they do not sing well from a technical standpoint we should not be disappointed. They should not be exploited in any way. They may gather about the piano with their leader and not suffer the embarrassment or injury that sometimes result from "marching" to the platform and facing a sea of adult faces. If we would make the special days red-letter days to little children, we must think of the children and their pleasure rather than of the pleasure of adults only.

In most cases if we care for the everyday experiences of our children, the special days will care for themselves, because they will be a part of these experiences.

The Expanded Session

By "EXPANDED SESSION" we mean extra time given by the church school—time beyond the traditional hour on Sunday. In some schools this expanded session is an extension of the time of the Sunday session. The children are allowed to remain for two hours, or, under certain conditions, for two hours and

a half. This allows for more play and more creative work. It allows also for a more leisurely development—providing time for the completion of interesting experiences. This type of expanded session, however, requires better-trained teachers. Obviously, unless the learning experiences of the children are happy and worth while it is not well to prolong such experiences. Where a real need for this type of expansion is felt by the leaders, this need should be met; but schools should prepare carefully both from the standpoint of leadership and that of gaining the co-operation of the homes before engaging in a longer session. One of the criticisms of the expanded session by thoughtful parents has been that the children are often indoors too much. We can readily understand why some parents should object to a long session in a poorly ventilated, crowded room where the activities are rather passive. Such a session would be harmful rather than helpful. These same parents, however, would be happy to have their children remain for a long session of healthy, wholesome development which is not too stimulating and yet not too deadening, with part of the time spent out of doors.

Many of the same things that we have said of the extension of the Sunday hour apply also to the type of expansion which makes use of an additional hour or more on a week day. This is, in some respects, easier to handle, because the children are stimulated for a shorter time.

The whole question of an expanded session is one that needs careful study. We know that the church is not giving enough time to the religious education of its children, and this may be the solution of the problem.

For Assignment and Discussion

1. What is the difference between thinking of "worship," "friendliness," and "acquiring knowledge" as elements of a program, rather than as separate sections into which a program may be divided?

2. Write a brief but comprehensive paper on "Worship in a Kindergarten."

3. What is meant by a balanced procedure?

4. Give reasons for the sequence of the play experiences suggested in the plans for a "Sunday Morning Session" included in this chapter.

5. Note any changes which you can make in your usual method of teaching which will make it more effective.

6. Select the one of the following experiences of children which seems to you most fruitful for religious development. Plan in detail how you would develop it religiously.

Planting a garden.
Entertaining a friend.
Going to bed at night.
Eating breakfast.
Going into the church auditorium.
Hearing stories of Jesus.
Making a gift for the minister.

The following outline may help you to plan thoughtfully:

a. The child's experience.
b. The desired outcomes.
c. The materials to be used. (Songs, stories, pictures, dramatization, manual work, etc.)
d. Procedure.

Helpful Books, Pamphlets, and Magazines

THE CHILD-CENTERED SCHOOL, *Rugg and Shumaker.*

THE CREATIVE HOME, *Deering.*

MISSIONARY EDUCATION OF BEGINNERS, *Jessie Eleanor Moore.*

THE WORSHIP OF THE LITTLE CHILD, *Edna Dean Baker.*

THE PROJECT PRINCIPLE IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, *Shaver.*

DENOMINATIONAL LEAFLETS AND PAMPHLETS.

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL LEAFLETS AND PAMPHLETS.

DENOMINATIONAL AND INTERDENOMINATIONAL MAGAZINES.

DENOMINATIONAL CURRICULA FOR SUNDAY, WEEKDAY, AND VACATION SESSIONS OF THE CHURCH SCHOOL.

CHAPTER XII

The Parents' Part

As THIS book is meant primarily to be a textbook for church-school teachers, most of the problems discussed have been from the standpoint of the church school; and yet the author and readers have constantly been aware that there is a factor in the religious education of children that is even more important than the church school.

Importance of Home Training

The home was God's first school of religion, and is now the most important educational factor in the training of children.

The word "educational" is sometimes erroneously understood to mean only a change for the better, or development in the right direction. It may mean this, but it may also mean a change for the worse. Therefore, when we say that the home is the most valuable educational factor in training children we recognize both the value of the right kind of home and the danger of the wrong kind.

There are many reasons why the home is most important in the education of children. Let us discuss a few.

1. The home is a natural setting for educational procedure.

Our best efforts in church school and in day school to provide a right atmosphere for learning are, to a large

extent, frank attempts to duplicate the informality and democracy of the home, but even though great strides have been made, we have not yet succeeded. For example, in the Kindergarten of the church school we talk about obedience at home—tell stories, sing songs, and even dramatize this obedience. In addition we help to develop obedience to the laws which children and leaders make for the Kindergarten on Sunday, or in weekday or vacation school. This helps wonderfully, but it does not outweigh the day-by-day training in obedience or disobedience which parents are giving to their children in a natural setting. We talk about helping in the home, and really encourage the children to want to help, but unless the parents train in helpfulness in the everyday opportunities that arise in the home our teaching will be neutralized.

We talk about the use of money and try to give guidance, but very early children acquire definite attitudes toward money in the place where money is constantly discussed and used wisely or unwisely. We make a sincere effort to teach little children to pray. We make it a natural thing for them to talk to our heavenly Father at church and suggest the various odd times—any time and anywhere—that they may commune with Him, but the natural setting for this communion is the home, and most little children who are led to pray naturally have much help and guidance from parents or some adult in the home.

Home is the natural setting for play activities, and children can be educated religiously through play as in no other way. Wise teachers are introducing play, especially in weekday and vacation schools, which most nearly approach the home situation, but home is still the natural setting for play.

2. *There is continuity of time in the home for educational procedure.*

So often the church-school teacher wishes for more time. Just as she sees a glimmer of understanding in Susan's eyes and a first response in co-operation from Randolph, it is time to go home. It will be several days before she will see the children again and she feels that if, for the next few days, she could live with Susan she might help her to understand truly that God lets little children help in His world; and she believes that if she were in Randolph's home for several consecutive days or weeks she would find chances for co-operation, one following the other in close enough sequence to give repetition, and thus to help to form the habit of co-operation.

Not only are the children in the home together for days and weeks but for many consecutive years they are in the family circle. A Kindergarten teacher does not often see the fruit of the seed she is sowing, because she is with the children for a year or two only. Thus she has no opportunity for evaluating her teaching in the light that is thrown on it by later years—years of adolescence and years of maturity. The parents have time enough to plant the seed today and watch through many tomorrows the fruits of their sowing.

3. *There is possible in the home a better understanding of inherited tendencies and individual characteristics.*

No two children are exactly alike. The church-school teacher makes an honest effort to understand the individual characteristics of each child in her group, but she does not have the opportunities for this, nor the background of knowledge possessed by the parents. Certain

attractive characteristics are evidenced by Lena, and immediately Mother says, "Lena is very much like Sister Anna when she was a child." Or when Lena shows symptoms of being a bit stubborn, Father says, "We are going to have to help Lena. When I was a little chap, I know I acted in the same way." Parents can help to build character more wisely because of a knowledge of the inherited tendencies of their children.

In every way parents have more opportunities than the church-school teacher of knowing truly the characteristics of their children.

4. *The love of parents for their children is coupled with a peculiar sense of responsibility.*

There is no love like the love of a parent for a child. There are, it is true, many devoted, consecrated teachers in the church school who are untiring in their efforts in behalf of the children in their group, but they do not feel the weight of responsibility for the religious development of each child, in the sense that it should be felt by the parents. The very love of parents should make it possible for them to be more solicitous and patient in training their children and more keenly alert to their religious needs. They are in a peculiar sense responsible to God for the children He has given to them.

How the Home Teaches Religion

Our homes are very busy. Parents are really puzzled oftentimes when they realize the difference between the homes of their childhood and the homes of today—puzzled because there are so many things to take children out of the home. Is this not one of the reasons why home training should begin very early, while the children are still in the home?

Shall we suggest a few ways in which parents can give religious training to their children?

Atmosphere—

Dr. Pell says:—

"The first thing a mother makes for her child after he is born is an atmosphere. This wonderful garment is of so fine a texture that it cannot be seen with the naked eye; yet it is the most substantial thing she ever makes for him. And it is the most important. It is the most important not only because it is going to be his most intimate garment throughout his childhood, but because the wearing of it is going to affect his whole subsequent life.

"This means, of course, that the weaving of this most delicate but most real of all maternal creations is a very serious matter. It is all the more serious because it begins before the mother is conscious of it, and because it is going on to the end whether she will or no.

"It is a most-amazing piece of work, and I don't pretend to know how it is done. Part of the material, I know, comes out of the mother's head and part out of her heart: but which of these two furnishes the warp and which the woof I have never been able to guess. I only know that something must come from both: the atmosphere that is woven out of either alone is always a failure.

"To make the right sort of atmosphere for little John's spirit to breathe and grow in one must actually think as well as feel. And one must direct one's thoughts. One must think of the things that are as pure as the atmosphere one wants to create. For this, fortunately, we have an ideal program: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'"[1]

The Family Altar—

Shall we, for a few minutes, look into an ancient home where God's presence was truly felt—a home hallowed

[1]From *Bringing up John,* by Pell. Used by permission Fleming H. Revell Co., Publishers.

by the presence of the Ark of the covenant? For the three months in which the Ark of the Lord rested in the house of Obed-edom, were not the father and mother better able to meet the problems of each day, and were not the children strengthened to work and play as in His sight? For the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom.

Some one has said, "The family altar is the Ark brought down to date." Perhaps the chief reason for the absence of true worship in the home is that there are so few family altars. A second reason is that many of the children in our homes only know the family altar as the place where "Father talks to God about the things he and Mother like to talk about."

In a Christian home a little four-year-old kneeling beside her father pulled his sleeve as he was thanking the heavenly Father for His good gifts to them and added, "And oatmeal, Daddy." In how many homes would this have been the natural thing to do? How many prayers are so worded that the children have a definite part in them? This happy naturalness coupled with reverence on the part of the child was the result of many mornings spent as a family in real communion with the Father.

There must be a definite plan for the family altar. The time occupied in worship need not be long, but each family must be careful to consider just when this time shall be. In most homes the few minutes following either breakfast or the evening meal will be a season when every member of the home can be present.

After the best time is ascertained, the family worship should take place at this same time every day, so that no conflicting engagements will be made by any member of the household. The important thing is to have a definite time.

While we may worship God in any room in the house, it is helpful to set apart a room for this. Some families linger in the dining-room for this season of communion. Others assemble in the living-room, where the piano may be used. The room is not so important as the atmosphere which pervades the room. Perhaps nothing affects a little child more than this atmosphere. It should not be light and flippant. Neither should it be long-faced and doleful. Perhaps natural reverence best defines it.

A time and place having been chosen, the all-important problem is to bring each child consciously into the presence of God. A father cannot do this unless he knows the needs and interests of each child. Perhaps we can best show how this may be done by picturing an ordinary everyday family.

There are Father and Mother, Frank, a manly boy of eleven, Dorothy, who is eight, and four-year-old Margaret.

It is the usual custom for Father to lead in prayer, although Mother does this when he is out of town, and once when Father was out of town and Mother was too ill to have the children come into her room, her heart was made glad by Frank's report—"We didn't have a long prayer, but we knelt together and all three said, 'Please make Mother well and take care of Daddy,' and then Dot and I said the Lord's Prayer."

Father and Mother have a definite, although elastic, plan for each day. It is surprising how much can be put into even ten minutes of time. There is always a time during the week when each child has a chance to use something correlated with his church-school lesson. Each child knows when "my day" comes. Mother's help is needed in retelling Margaret's story, of which Peggy (as they call her) never tires, and to which she contributes.

Margaret is allowed on her day to choose the song they sing, and her Bible verse becomes a family possession or thought for the day. It may often be included in the family prayer.

Dorothy is old enough to retell a Bible story, and Frank, on his day, reads a passage of Scripture connected with his lesson.

Mother and Father, too, have their days. Sometimes their choice of Scripture is just one verse of which they love to think and speak. Sometimes it is a Psalm in which all except baby Margaret may join and through which all may worship. Sometimes one of the old church hymns is sung; sometimes one of the songs of worship with which the children are familiar.

Perhaps of all things the prayer requires the most thought, for it is not easy to lead a prayer which voices the needs of two grown people, an eleven-year-old boy, a girl of eight, and a four-year-old. Years of development in worship are responsible for the difference in Father's halting attempt at self-expression in worship when he and Mother first began life together, and the following natural prayer which helped Mother, Frank, Dorothy, and little Margaret, and himself to realize the presence of the heavenly Father.

It was little Margaret's day, and her folder for the week contained the story "The Baby Moses," with the Bible verse, "Certainly I will be with thee." Father's prayer was—

"Our dear heavenly Father, help us all through the day to know that you are saying to us, 'Certainly I will be with thee.' Help Margaret to know it in her play, Dorothy and Frank as they go to school, Mother as she keeps the home for us, and me as I go to my work. May we play and work better because Thou art near us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."

Everyday Experiences—

The best training of all is a religious interpretation of everyday experiences.

It is surprising how many opportunities there are for a busy mother and father to seize if they are really looking for them. Dr. Pell says again, in writing of a young mother's influence:—

"Weave your thoughts of God with John and your thoughts of John with God. If you have found it hard to fix your mind upon the things of the spirit by themselves, you will be amazed to see how easy and delightful it is to think of them in connection with John—as when you think of God as John's Father, and dream of the day when you will take him by the hand and lead him to his Father, that he may know Him, and love Him, and walk with Him forever."[2]

[2]From *Bringing up John,* Pell. Used by permission Fleming H. Revell Co., Publishers.

When religious education is uppermost in the minds of parents, opportunities for teaching will be made and seized.

There is such a thing as sanctimonious religious "patter." We are not referring to this, but to a genuine association of God with everyday life.

A great many opportunities for teaching come through the questions a little child asks busy parents every day.

Careful investigators have grouped under the following heads the questions which children ask: forces of nature, mechanical forces, origin of life, theology and Bible stories, death and heaven.

Most of the questions can be answered either from a materialistic point of view or from a religious point of view.

The little child looks up at the evening star and thinks:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!"

There should be some one near by to tell him of the God who made the stars, else, as a thoughtful observer has noted, when the child has spent about a year in college he may say:—

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
I don't wonder what you are;
What you are I know quite well,
Your component parts can tell."

The experience of gardening may be religious. The thought of partnership with God may come early to little minds, if guided religiously.

As I plant my tiny garden—
Sow each seed with loving care,
Something whispers as I listen,
Whispers, "God is near."

As I work my tiny garden,
  Tending flowers wet with dew,
Something whispers as I listen,
  "God is working, too."

So I work and sing while working,
  Turning up the fertile sod,
Work and sing and whisper softly,
  "I am helping God."

Play experiences may be interpreted religiously. Sharing toys, taking turns, playing happily should be expected in any home, but in a Christian home the children should know that these things are pleasing to God.

Honesty, courtesy, truthfulness, helpfulness, and obedience can only be understood by a child as he learns them, not as abstract virtues, but as he is guided into practicing them.

There will be times, it is true, when parents will definitely give needed information through stories and songs, and so forth, but the most important training comes through guidance in everyday experiences. It is important that parents know that everything which touches a child's life may have religious significance.

A Common Purpose

It is essential that church-school teachers know home experiences and build on them, and essential that parents know what is initiated and discussed in the church school, that they may build on it.

This joining of hands in a common purpose may come about in various ways—through the study of the lesson courses used in the church school, through visiting the teacher, through telephone calls, through visiting the church school occasionally, through parents' classes or discussion groups and through departmental parent-teacher meetings.

Most of these suggestions need no elaboration, but it may prove helpful for us to discuss in detail the various kinds of possible discussion groups for parents. The differences in these study groups lie largely in the time available for study and the time available for meeting.

Parents' Discussion Groups

The Sunday Morning Class—

In some churches it is possible to form short-term parents' classes that meet on Sunday while the children are in the church school. These classes spend a large part of their time in studying the religious education of children. Sometimes a study book is selected, and sometimes topics for study are selected and assigned for discussion ahead of time. One quarter of the regular Sunday-school year may be used for this study. This will mean that for three months in the year young fathers and mothers will omit the regular Bible-class lesson, which they are studying for their own enrichment, and will study the religious education of their children.

Many churches have two classrooms available—one for the men's Bible class and one for the women's Bible class. Will it not be possible for three months in the year to combine the men and women into two classes—and have a "Men's and Women's Bible Class," and a "Parents' Class"? This will provide a room for the parents' class and will allow for choice, so that none need be forced to enroll.

The best available leader in the community should be chosen for this class.

Other Times for Meeting—

The suggestion of the Sunday-morning class may not be the most practicable in all cases. In most denominations there is a woman's organization of some kind. In

some churches this organization has set apart a definite period for studying parents' problems.

In many Kindergartens the parents meet with the teachers once a month or at least once a quarter for study or discussion. At this time parents and teachers may interchange experiences which they have had with the children. They may talk over together the church-school plans for the coming month or quarter, so that the parents will know definitely their part in helping the children toward the outcomes desired. The songs that may be used as a part of the coming experiences may be learned by the parents, with the suggestion that they be used many times with the children in natural situations. Certain stories may be emphasized also. But the greater help will probably come from a discussion of the practice in living which can best take place in the home.

Each church—in fact, each group—must make its own arrangement as to time. If possible, arrange the time to suit both father and mother. This means that some provision must be made in many cases for caring for the children. There is one town where the young women who are college students are available at a small charge, and make a practice of doing their studying at the homes where father and mother desire to spend an hour or two away from home while the children are asleep. There are some churches where the older girls will be glad to render this service "gratis" as a class or individual activity.

There is always a possibility of afternoon meetings. Very few fathers can come to meetings at this time, and so for this reason we have emphasized the possibility of a Sunday morning or night meeting. Many churches, however, have been able to have a "Mother's Meeting" only. This, of course, is well worth while and should be promoted by all means, if the other is not possible.

A Typical Program for a Parents' Meeting

Desired Outcome: A better understanding of the prayer life of a little child.

Music.

Song.

Discussion: "The Value and Danger of Forms of Prayer." By a parent.

Discussion: "Prayer Songs to Be Used at Home." Preferably led by a teacher of little children. Definite songs which link up with the church-school lesson may be chosen, and parents may be led to sing some of them. (See chapters on "Music.")

Discussion: "Informal Prayers." Several parents should contribute to this discussion, telling of the spontaneous, informal prayers of their children and their method of leading the children into a natural communion with our heavenly Father.

A Book Review: "Children's Prayers Recorded by Their Mother." This book may be reviewed by a member of the class and afterwards circulated.

Closing Prayer. (Written on the board and repeated by all): "Dear Friend of little children, we draw near to Thee for cleansing. Make us more worthy, for we hold little children by the hand. We need Thy wisdom in guiding them, and Thy understanding of their needs. Lord, teach us to teach them to truly pray. Amen."

Note.—The books which will be of most help in preparing this program are *How We Can Help Children to Pray,* Mumford, and *Children's Prayers Recorded by Their Mother.* See also Chapter VII of this volume, "Helping Little Children to Pray."

Available Helps

There are many books and pamphlets now available. It is well for study groups to communicate with denominational headquarters, in order that the latest books and pamphlets may be obtained. The following problems are suggestive of the type which may prove helpful for use in discussion groups. Many national, state, and city wel-

fare boards, as well as denominational publishing houses, have available leaflets and pamphlets covering one or more of these problems:

Needs of children.
Home atmosphere.
Children's questions.
The family altar.
Teaching children to pray.
Leading children through nature to God.
Stories for children.
Training children in truthfulness.
Home authority.
The power of example.
Sunday with the children.
Teaching property rights to children.
Teaching self-control.
Children's fears.

In Review

SHALL we end this brief study with the poem with which we began? As we read it again may it mean infinitely more because of our study together—inadequate, but an honest attempt to "weave our thoughts of God with the thoughts of little children."

REACH DOWN YOUR HAND

"Reach down your hand!
The little one who trudges by your side
Is striving hard to match your grown-up stride;
But oh, his feet are very tiny yet,
His arm so short—I pray you, don't forget—
Reach down your hand!

"Keep soft your voice!
For it was such a little while ago,
This small one left the place where tones are low;
His voice still holds the cadence of that land
Where no one ever gave a stern command—
Keep soft your voice!

"Lift up your heart!
The little child you struggle so to teach
Has resource far above the human reach;
Lift up your heart!"
—*Lucie Haskell Hill.*[4]

For Assignment and Discussion

1. Should the church school or the home assume major responsibility for the religious education of its children?

2. Plan in detail a program for a "Parents' Discussion Group," developing one of the following topics:

How Religion Is Taught in the Home.
Children's Questions.
Home Authority.

3. Map out a practical plan by which your own church may help to train the parents of its children.

Helpful Books and Pamphlets

THE CREATIVE HOME, *Deering.*

CHILDREN'S PRAYERS RECORDED BY THEIR MOTHER.

THE WORLD THAT WAS, *John G. Bowman.*

TRAINING CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY, *Weigle.*

PARENTHOOD AND CHILD NURTURE, *Baker.*

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE FAMILY, *Cope.*

CHILDREN ARE LIKE THAT, *Dixon.*

CHARACTER GUIDANCE AND OCCUPATIONS FOR CHILDREN, *McCallum.*

IF PARENTS ONLY KNEW, *Cleveland.*

EVERYDAY PROBLEMS OF THE EVERYDAY CHILD, *Thom.*

JUST NORMAL CHILDREN, *Mateer.*

DENOMINATIONAL LEAFLETS AND PAMPHLETS.

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[4]From "Children" (now *Parents' Magazine*). Used by permission.

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